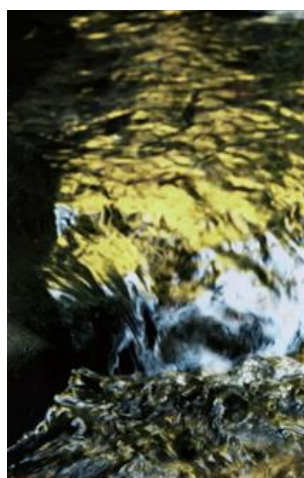
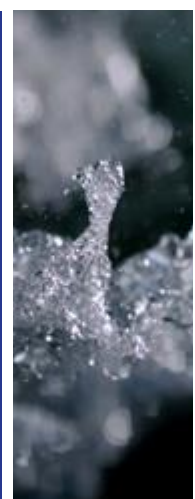




Immigrant integration in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas: local policies and policymaking relations in Italy

Country Reports on multilevel dynamics



REPORT  
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## Abstract

This report analyses multi-level governance dynamics and integration policies targeting post-2014 migrants as developed by six small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Italy. Primarily based on interviews conducted in each of the selected municipalities, it provides an overview of 1) national and regional integration policies targeting post-2014 migrants in Italy; 2) local policies and policymaking relations among the key actors in the six localities and key features of policy networks within which these actors interact; 3) how these actors perceive and define integration. The report finds that Italian localities swing between complete political autonomy from and total economic dependence on the higher levels of government. Specifically, local authorities have neither institutional obligations nor specific economic resources in the field of migrant integration. As a result, local integration policies involving post-2014 migrants generally depend on the local actors' will and ability to successfully participate in the calls for projects issued by the higher levels of government. This dependence on specific competitive procedures enhances the impact of local governments' political orientation on integration policies by increasing the relevance of local authorities' availability to take initiative with regard to post-2014 migrant integration. Indeed, in the progressive localities (Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa), the municipality shows a proactive approach towards attracting funds for integration through projects whereas this is not the case in localities with conservative local administrations (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate). The dependence on calls also shapes governance networks that are largely project-based with professional and voluntary-based NGOs managing the large majority of services addressing post-2014 migrants, either on their own or on behalf of public entities, whereas mainstream welfare services play a minor role with few exceptions. Although the size and density of governance networks vary across localities, the marginality of the business community and of migrant organisations emerges in all the target localities.



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# 1. Introduction

Over the last few years, Italy has received unprecedented numbers of migrants and asylum seekers, often in an unorderly way. This has led to a growing immigrant presence in scarcely prepared small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRA). The way in which these local communities are responding to the challenges related to migrants' arrival and settlement in their territory is crucial for the future of immigrant integration in Europe. This is even more true if we consider that in 2022 these localities are again on the front line of refugee reception in Europe following the arrival of thousands of Ukrainians in Italy.

This report aims to explore how six small and medium sized towns and rural areas in Italy have responded to the presence of post-2014 migrants<sup>1</sup>. In particular it aims to assess, first, which policies have been developed and implemented in these small and medium sized towns and rural areas, or, in other words, how have SMsTRA mobilized vis-à-vis the new challenge and in relation to the policies and funding schemes put forwards by other levels of government. In doing so, the project looks at the embeddedness of local actors in multilevel frameworks in which regional, national and EU policies and stakeholders may play a decisive role in shaping local integration policymaking. Second, the report focuses on the interactions between the actors involved in integration policymaking, asking: what different patterns of interaction can we identify between local (policy) actors and regional/national/supranational authorities and stakeholders? Which factors have led to the emergence of collaborations as well as tensions between actors at different government levels? Are new cooperative relationships eventually emerging and, if so, what are the key features of resulting policy networks? Third, the report asks how the actors involved in these policy networks perceive and frame the integration of post-2014 migrants, under the assumption that frames can play a key role in influencing policymaking processes.

In these localities – which differ in terms of their size, the political affiliation of their local government, their experience with cultural diversity, their economic and demographic situation and that are located in different regions – a total of 89 interviews in person and online (listed in the Appendix) have been conducted with actors involved in local integration policymaking, i.e. members of local government, local officials, street-level bureaucrats, local councilors and non-governmental actors, including private employers, real estate agencies, and landlords' and tenants' associations. The wide range of interviewees is consistent with the whole-of-community perspective that conceptualises immigrant integration as a process of communitymaking that is brought about by the interactions of multiple actors – as individuals, organisations, institutions and/or corporate entities – who shape the local community with their multilevel and multi-situated relations, networks, interests and resources (see Caponio and Pettrachin 2021). Insights derived from the

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<sup>1</sup> The group of migrants that arrived in (Western) Europe after 2014 is very heterogeneous, “but mostly comprises migrants that left from areas of political and humanitarian crises” (Working Paper 1 2021, 1-2). The majority of “post-2014 migrants” entered thus as asylum-seekers but may have obtained different legal statuses by now (see for more detail Working Paper 1 for the Whole-COMM project).



interview material have been complemented with an in-depth analysis of policy and legal documents.

The report crucially finds that Italian municipalities have no specific institutional obligations concerning migrant reception and integration, with the exception of unaccompanied minors. At the same time, municipalities do not receive structural resources for migrant integration. Hence, almost all the local budget for integration of post-2014 migrants comes from the calls for projects issued by the national government and funded through EU programmes (i.a. AMIF, ESF). Against this backdrop, politics significantly affects integration policies addressing post-2014 migrants. Indeed, in the progressive localities, the municipality shows a proactive “pro-migrant” approach and participates in calls for projects, working in tight cooperation with local NGOs that play a key role as well. As for the conservative localities, we see a more proactive “anti-migrant” approach in the conservative localities of the North of Italy whereas in conservative localities of the South local authorities are simply disengaged from integration initiatives because of weaker administrative capacity and smaller economic and organisational resources they can rely on. Despite the differences in municipalities’ orientation, in all localities mainstream welfare services appear as still rather unequipped to deal with post-2014 migrants. The result is that the large majority of services addressing post-2014 migrants are managed by professional and voluntary-based NGOs, with their own resources or after a public procurement. Political orientation also affects the degree of cooperation among local actors, which is higher in progressive localities than in conservative ones whereas conflicts remain marginal everywhere. Generally speaking, we can conclude that the horizontal dimension of multilevel governance is more developed in progressive than in conservative localities. Finally, the local authorities and political majorities’ orientation, decisions and requests appear as the most relevant factors explaining local actors’ decision-making in all case studies, although this importance assumes diverse meanings. In progressive localities, it refers to the activism of local authorities whereas in conservative localities it is intended as local authorities’ obstructionism or lack of initiative.

The report is organized as follows. Section 3 gives a detailed picture of the six case studies carried out in Italy. It starts by introducing the national context of integration policies in Italy, with a particular focus on integration policies and policy making, implementation and funding, as well as an analysis of the regional context in Piedmont and Sicily. Afterwards, Section 3.2 presents the six local cases, outlining their main features based on the Whole-COMM selection variables, on local policy documents, and key insights collected during the interviews. Section 4.1 contains an analysis of the main themes regarding the development of integration policies, and specifically the development of local policies and approaches, the relevant MLG dynamics, as well as the role of national policies. This section finds that politics does affect integration policies targeting post-2014 migrants, with a more proactive approach to integration in progressive locality and fruitful cooperation with local NGOs. In contrast, this analysis also finds that the site of the municipalities in question does not make a relevant difference when it comes to the promotion of integration initiatives, locals’ participation, and the definition of the local agenda. Subsequently, Section 4.2 looks at the frames of integration in the six case studies, showing a prevalence of frames related to socio-economic self-reliance, interactions and mutual adaptation of natives and migrants, and shared belonging. In Section 4.3 the analysis focuses on MLG dynamics in integration policy making. This part of the report includes the results of the social network analysis developed based on





interactions between actors in each locality as they emerged from the survey. The different functions of actors involved in the governance of immigrant integration are also analysed and the dynamic of cooperation and conflict among these actors. Section 4.4 regards decision-making processes and includes the results emerge from the interviews response to the survey. In all cases, the political orientation, decisions, and requests of political majorities and local authorities appear relevant, albeit in different ways. Finally, the concluding section highlights the main comparative findings of the analysis

This Report is a deliverable of the Whole-COMM Project, which focuses on small and medium sized municipalities and rural areas in eight European and two non-European countries that have experienced and dealt with the increased arrival and settlement of migrants after 2014 (for more information about the project see: Caponio and Pettrachin, 2021).



## 2. Methodology

Empirical data for this report was collected between October 2021 and February 2022. Data collection comprised document analysis and semi-structured qualitative interviews with respondents at the local, regional/provincial, and national level. Potential respondents were sampled based on their (professional) capacity, e.g. local officials working on integration in a municipality or employees in an NGO offering non-profit services to refugees. Most respondents were contacted through email or a phone call. After establishing first contacts in a municipality, other respondents were identified using the method of ‘snowball sampling’ (Bryman 2016). In total, 87 interviews with 89 respondents were conducted. The large majority of them were recorded.

The six localities on which this report focuses were selected based on several different variables. All localities hosted a reception centre for asylum-seekers or refugees between 2014 and 2017 and were still hosting some post-2014 migrants in late 2021. Case selection was conducted in the framework of the broader Whole-COMM project (see Caponio and Pettrachin 2021 for more details) in order to maximize variation among a set of variables including: population size<sup>2</sup>, the share of non-EU migrant residents before the arrival of post-2014 migrants, variations in income and population numbers between 2005 and 2014, the political parties in government (conservative vs progressive majorities). Some of these variables were additionally used to identify four types of localities.

Type	Characteristics	Selected cases in Italy
Type A ("revitalizing/ better-off" locality)	Recovering local economy and improving demographic profile, migrants' settlement before 2014	Cuneo (progressive small town, Cuneo province, Piedmont)
Type B (locality "in transition")	Improving economic and demographic situation, no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014	Avigliana (progressive rural area, Torino province, Piedmont)
Type C ("marginal" locality)	Demographic and economic decline, migrants' settlement before 2014	Acate and Santa Croce Camerina (conservative rural area, Ragusa province, Sicily) Novara (conservative medium town, Novara Province, Piedmont)

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<sup>2</sup> The Whole-COMM project distinguishes between medium towns (i.e., provincial/regional capitals with between 100,000 and 250,000 inhabitants), small towns (i.e., localities with between 50,000 and 80,000 inhabitants that are either provincial/regional capitals within rural regions/provinces or do not have any administrative function) and rural areas (i.e., localities with less than 30,000 inhabitants and a low population density).



Type D (“left-behind” locality)	Economic and demographic decline, no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014	Siracusa (progressive medium town, Siracusa Province, Sicily) Caltagirone (conservative small town, Catania Province, Sicily)
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The case selection reflects the main territorial cleavage in Italy, with three localities in the North, namely Novara, Cuneo, and Avigliana, and three cases selected in the South, namely Siracusa, Caltagirone, and Acate. To ensure territorial variation, the six selected communities are distributed across six provinces, namely Cuneo, Novara, Torino (in Piedmont), Siracusa, Ragusa and Catania (in Sicily).

Piedmont is a region with a longstanding tradition of migrants’ settlement from the South of Italy (1960-1970) and, more recently, from other EU and non-EU countries. In 2014, asylum seekers and international protection holders in reception centers were 5% (3.125) of the total, while the same figure at the end of 2020 was 9% (7.275). Being located on the border with France, the region is also concerned by significant secondary movements of people trying to reach other Member States. The economic opportunities of Piedmont are less attractive than those of the other Northern regions such as Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna. Nevertheless, the region encompasses some particularly attractive economic districts (eg. automotive in the province of Torino, logistics in the province of Novara, manufacturing and agriculture in the province of Cuneo).

In 2014, Sicily was one of the top three regions in Italy by number of asylum applications and hosted 22% (14.769) of asylum seekers and international protection holders. At the end of 2020, Sicily was still one the regions with the highest numbers of asylum seekers and international protection holders housed in reception facilities, accounting for 8,1% (6.480) of the total. At the same time, the emigration from the region is substantial because of the poor economic opportunities. In some localities this depopulating trend has been contrasted by the increasing presence of foreign residents, including in inner areas. In terms of economic sectors, tourism is particularly relevant in Siracusa while agriculture is key both in Siracusa and Ragusa so that seasonal work is largely widespread in our target localities.





## 3. Introducing the cases

### 3.1 National context

#### 3.1.1. Integration policies and policy-making

Italian policies addressing post-2014 migrant integration can be systematised into two parts. The first one concerns asylum seekers and refugees, the second one regards foreign people in general.

##### 3.1.1.1. Integration of asylum seekers and refugees

As for the first part, the Italian legislation has always been rather lacking. Despite the several national bills presented through the 1990s and the early 2000s, the laws transposing the EU Directives have so far been the only acts specifically addressing asylum, confirming the key role of the EU in shaping the Italian asylum regime (Finotelli 2018).

Against this backdrop, the main instrument for asylum seekers' and refugees' integration has always been the reception system **SPRAR** (Protection system for asylum seekers and refugees as well as for migrants with humanitarian status), **set up at the beginning of the 2000s<sup>3</sup> and recently renamed SAI**, as better explained below.

**SAI facilities are set up on a voluntary basis by local authorities that apply in response to the calls for projects issued by the Ministry of the Interior**, which covers the largest share of the costs. Reception facilities, usually managed by local NGOs that participate in local authorities' public bids, are generally articulated in apartment-based solutions; they include integration measures (legal support, socio-cultural mediation, language learning, support to access services and seeking jobs and housing solutions) and are highly regulated and monitored.

Despite being largely acknowledged as a good practice, **SAI has always suffered from the limited number of places available**, constantly below reception demands, and an uneven distribution throughout the country, as a consequence of its bottom-up and locally based approach.

In cases where no place is available in SAI facilities, according to Legislative Decree 140/2005 which transposed the EU Reception Directive (2003/9/CE), accommodation should be provided in one of the **centres directly managed by the Ministry of the Interior, only for the time necessary** to find a suitable accommodation in SAI. Clearly, the national law transposing the EU Reception Directive has

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<sup>3</sup> Its forerunner was the "National Asylum Programme" (PNA – *Programma Nazionale Asilo*), started in October 2000 on the basis of a memorandum of understanding signed by the Ministry of Interior, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI – *Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani*). In 2002 PNA was formally institutionalised by Law 189/2002 and became the official system of asylum seekers and refugees reception, renamed SPRAR.



allowed for important exceptions to the SAI system, establishing a **de facto two-pronged approach** to reception (Semprebon and Pelacani, 2019; Marchetti 2020; Ponzo, Giannetto and Roman 2022).

Within this legislative framework, **in 2014**, when a sudden increase of mixed inflows was registered, the government adopted a National Plan for the relocation of asylum seekers which **entitled the Prefectures to set up governmental reception facilities, called CAS** (Extraordinary Reception Centres). Regrettably, the **quality of services provided by CAS was extremely heterogeneous**: CAS projects went from SAI-like solutions organised in apartments and oriented towards people's autonomy, to large-size isolated centres run by for-profit subjects and with almost none integration services at least until 2017<sup>4</sup> (Commissione Parlamentare d'inchiesta 2017; Corte dei Conti 2018). Moreover, the Prefectures have no obligations to consult the local authorities to open a CAS. Therefore, especially in 2014-2015 when CAS multiplied, local communities regarded them as impositions from above. The poor management of a large share of CAS combined with the exclusion of local communities from the decisions over those facilities fostered protests and inter-institutional tensions (Campomori and Ambrosini 2020; Caponio, Donatiello and Ponzo 2021; Ponzo, Giannetto and Roman 2022). Despite those limits, CAS soon made up for the large majority of reception facilities overtaking SAI.

Against this backdrop, in **December 2016** the Ministry of Interior and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) signed the so-called **"Bari Agreement" to fix a quota of asylum seekers and refugees per municipality**<sup>5</sup> and simultaneously introduced a "safeguard clause"<sup>6</sup>, establishing that the municipalities whose SAI reception places met the above ratio would be exempted from the establishment of any new CAS. This led to a substantial increase in SAI places but governmental facilities continued to grow faster.

It is worth underlying that, according to Legislative Decree 142/2015, **all unaccompanied minors (UAMs), both asylum seekers and not, should go through a single specialised reception path** articulated in two levels – i.e., governmental reception centres for minors (maximum stay of 60 days) and SAI facilities for minors. **However, in case of unavailability of places in SAI facilities, municipalities are responsible for the reception of minors: this is the main solution in the many areas where SAI for UAMs is missing.** When neither SAI nor the municipalities can provide the reception needed, minors can be temporarily hosted in facilities set up by the local Prefectures and should be transferred as soon as possible to SAI or municipal centres (Legislative Decree 113/2016).

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<sup>4</sup> In 2017, the Ministry of the Interior adopted a new bid scheme for governmental centres according to which CAS should provide reception and integration services similar to those offered in SPRAR facilities, with the exception of legal assistance to prepare for the interview, vocational training and support for job seeking and housing seeking (Ministerial Decree, 7 March 2017)

<sup>5</sup> It fixed a ratio of 2.5 hosted asylum seekers per 1,000 residents with adjustments for small municipalities under 2,000 residents (fixed quota of six reception places) and for the capital cities of metropolitan areas (2 places per 1,000 residents).

<sup>6</sup> *Circolare* of the Ministry of the Interior, 1 October 2016; Directive of the Minister of the Interior, 11 October 2016



The costs for unaccompanied minors' reception are covered by the central government through the National Fund for the Reception of Unaccompanied Minors (ANCI et al. 2017).

Moreover, the collaboration between different Ministries, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM led to the **adoption in April 2017 of the Law 47/2017 on the protection of unaccompanied minors**. This is considered as a rather advanced piece of legislation, which follows several recommendations stemming, inter alia, from the European Commission. Importantly, the same law also established the system of voluntary guardianship for unaccompanied minors.

In the following years, the **high politicisation of the issue led government coalitions to use reception reforms as flagships**, dismantling each time what the previous governments had done (Ponzo 2022).

The so-called **Decree on Security and Migration** (Legislative Decree 113/2018 adopted on 5 October 2018 and converted into Law 132/2018) was **adopted in 2018** by the government coalition of the Five Stars Movement and the League and **with Matteo Salvini as the Ministry of Interior**. This Decree narrowed the conditions to obtain a residence permit based on humanitarian grounds (so-called **“humanitarian protection”**<sup>7</sup>) and **excluded its holders from reception services**. At the same time, it neatly **distinguished reception services for asylum seekers and for beneficiaries of international protection**<sup>8</sup>: the first ones should be accommodated in CAS and the second ones in SAI centres for a maximum of 6 months, renewable once in case of necessity<sup>9</sup>.

In addition to the Decree, the public bid scheme for governmental centres, including CAS, was revised in December 2018.<sup>10</sup> The reform suppressed integration services and drastically reduced the per capita daily expenditure limit from 35 euros to 19-26 euros. The outcome was that asylum seekers would stay in governmental centres with no integration services, beneficiaries of humanitarian protection would lose the entitlement to reception services, and only beneficiaries of international protection would be able to enter SAI and enjoy integration services.

In the summer of 2019, a new coalition government was formed, in which the League was replaced by the centre-left Democratic Party. In **October 2020, the new government repealed some of the most restrictive provisions promoted by Matteo Salvini**. Decree 130/2020 broadened the set of rights attached to the complementary protection introduced by Legislative Decree 113/2018 in

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<sup>7</sup> This is an additional national form of protection foreseen by Italian law (Legislative Decree 286/1998, art. 5.6). It is alternative and residual to the refugee status and subsidiary protection, provided for by EU law.

<sup>8</sup> In this report, we use the term “asylum seekers” for those that are still in the asylum procedure, and “refugees” for those who have obtained either an international or a national form of protection. “Beneficiaries of international protection” is a sub-category of refugees that do not include those who receive national forms of protection (eg. humanitarian protection, special cases, etc)

<sup>9</sup> Actually, the prioritisation of beneficiaries of international protection over asylum seekers in accessing SAI facilities was already decided by the Ministry of Interior in 2016 (*Circolare* of the Ministry of Interior, 5 May 2016) but at that time this was regarded as a second best since the main goal was to reduce the two-pronged reception system to a single system, namely the SAI.

<sup>10</sup> Decree of the Ministry of Interior, 21 November 2018.



order to somewhat restore a form of protection similar to the former humanitarian protection. It also brought back the possibility for asylum seekers to access SAI although enjoying a lower amount of integration services compared to beneficiaries of protection. Indeed, SAI provides for two levels of reception: the first level, concerning applicants for international protection, includes material reception services, as well as healthcare, social and psychological assistance, linguistic-cultural mediation services, Italian language courses and territorial orientation services; the second level, targeting individuals who obtain some form of protection, includes also work orientation and vocational training. The maximum stay in SAI has remained of 6 months, renewable once.

It is worth underling that the Italian **reception system and the general welfare system are rather separated**. First, integration services provided in reception facilities have always been conceived as a sort of parallel welfare for asylum seekers and refugees, not integrated within the general welfare and integration policies. The related economic resources are given to the organisations managing reception facilities, which may provide integration services directly or in cooperation with local welfare services. Thus, synergies with general welfare policies depend on the willingness and capacity of both the organisations managing reception centres and the public entities responsible for the delivery of welfare services to cooperate. The latter are mainly the **regions for vocational training and employment, and the Provincial Centres for Adult Education** (CPIA – *Centri Provinciali per l’Istruzione degli Adulti*) depending on the Provinces for language learning (Giannetto, Ponzio and Roman 2019).

Second, **once beneficiaries of protection leave the reception facilities, there are no programmes aimed at supporting their integration** so that people pass from the hyper-assisted situation of reception to being completely on their own.

In order to alleviate this lack of integration programmes, in **September 2017 the Italian government approved the National Integration Plan for beneficiaries of international protection**, as foreseen by Legislative Decree 18/2014, which transposed the EU recast Qualification Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU). The Plan, to be funded by EU and national financial resources, set the priorities for 2017-2018: inter-religious dialogue, language learning, access to education and recognition of qualifications, access to healthcare services, employment and housing inclusion. It was drafted by the National Coordination Table established for this matter by the Ministry of Interior, which included also the Ministry of Labour, the regions, the Italian Province Union, ANCI, the National Anti-discrimination Office (UNAR), the National Commission for Asylum, UNHCR and IOM. However, the stakeholders sitting at the National Coordination Table brought forward conflicting agendas and the implementation process of the Plan was not clearly defined. As a consequence, its **enactment was mostly limited to pilot actions** carried out in three regions (Piedmont, Emilia Romagna and Calabria) by UNHCR<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> In 2021, the National Coordination Table resumed the efforts to define and implement a national integration strategy. A new Integration Plan was drafted with updated goals in line with the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027. The new Plan, which is yet to be approved at the time of writing, also sets objectives to improve the governance, implementation, and monitoring aspects of the actions proposed.





Overall, the lack of integration measures specifically addressing beneficiaries of international protection, together with the weak Italian welfare provisions, increase the risk of their social marginalisation.

### 3.1.1.2. Integration of migrants

As said above, the second part of Italian legislation affecting post-2014 migrants is made of **laws addressing foreigners in general**. Its core is the Law 40/1998 (called *Legge Turco-Napolitano*), called **“Turco-Napolitano Law”**, which **grants regular migrants with welfare rights equal to Italian citizens, and the provision of education and basic health services also to irregular migrants**<sup>12</sup>. Yet, a turf of further minor and unsystematic regulations that have followed in the 2000s have undermined this equality principle by requiring a certain length of residence in the country to access certain welfare benefits, especially cash benefits such as the National Fund for Supporting the access to Rented Houses or the Citizenship Income.

As better explained in the following section, almost all the funds for migrants’ integration are allocated to specific programmes and distributed through calls for projects. Hence, it is fundamental to look at the main programmes set up by the central government over the last five years.

In the framework of the **“Integrated multiannual planning in the field of work, integration and inclusion 2014-2020,”** the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies, has taken up the role of Delegated Authority of the **Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)** and the Intermediate Body of the **National Operational Programme (PON) for Inclusion (“PON Inclusion”)**, and of the National Operational Programme (PON) for Legality (“PON Legality”), managed by the Ministry of Interior - **PON programmes are funded through the European Structural and Investment Funds**. In particular, the aim of PON Inclusion is **to promote actions that tackle the risks of poverty and social exclusion, including also for victims of violence and trafficking, UAMs, international protection holders**. The PON “Legality” is a seven-year (2014-2020) investment plan managed by the Ministry of the Interior within the framework of cohesion policies. Its aims are to foster legality, social cohesion, and economic development in the five less developed regions in Italy, namely Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, and Sicily. It finances actions targeting regular migrants, asylum applicants, and international protection holders.

Importantly, this role of the Ministry of Labour has allowed for the coordination of European and national financial instruments, enhancing the contribution of all actors involved in integration at the national, regional, and local level.

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<sup>12</sup> In 2002, a new law on immigration was passed by parliament (the “Bossi-Fini Law”, no. 189/2002), which however affect immigration policies (mainly by introducing a link between job contract and residence permit, so that immigrants willing to enter Italy had to obtain a job offer before leaving their country) rather than integration measures and the relative division of competences.



Within the Integrated Multi Annual Planning, the **regions have been entrusted with the definition of Regional Intervention Plans for socio-economic inclusion, through co-planning with local authorities and NGOs.**

The **Directorate General of Immigration and Integration Policies** has also implemented a series of **interventions** aimed at the integration of vulnerable groups of migrants, including UAMs, based on a model of integrated, individual care. These interventions were first implemented with national funds and the European Social Fund (ESF), and later in the framework of the PUOI (*You can*) project, co-financed by the ESF and AMIF.

Joint ESF-AMIF funds have also been used to finance actions for the promotion of regular agricultural labour and against the gangmaster system<sup>13</sup>. The same resources were used to finance the projects Su.pr.eme and Su.pr.eme+ in the least developed regions, in the South, while AMIF funds made possible the analogous project ALT Caporolato (*Stop Gangmaster system*) in Northern Italy.

**Other key national programmes** and provisions include:

- **the AMIF National Programme**, a programmatic document defined following extensive consultation with the European Commission and the National Coordination Table for the definition of strategic and operational objectives to be carried out within the AMIF budget;
- **Regional Plans for civic-linguistic training of Third Country Nationals**, that have to be developed by each Italian regions, in partnership with the Regional Education Office, and are funded through AMIF;
- **the National Action Plan against Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance 2014-2016**, containing measures aimed at the full implementation of the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination. Approved by Ministerial Decree of August 7, 2015 by the Minister of Labor and Social Policies, this Plan represents the first example of a coordinated national response to racism and xenophobia (an updated version is currently being discussed);
- **the National Plan of Action against Trafficking and Severe Exploitation of Human Beings 2016-2018**, whose updated version for 2021-2025 is being drafted at the time of writing;
- **Law No. 199 of 2016 on “Provisions on combating the phenomena of undeclared work and labour exploitation in agriculture”**, which is aimed at tackling gangmaster system and introducing new forms of support for seasonal workers;
- **the Three-year plan to Combat Labour Exploitation in Agriculture and Gangmaster System 2020-2022**, which set the guidelines for the development of a national strategy against labour exploitation;

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<sup>13</sup> The term gangmaster has been traditionally used to describe the self-appointed manager who took charge of a gang of workers. The gangmaster negotiated directly with the farmer over payment for the work required. His profits were usually made by taking a share of workers' wages.



- **the National Guidelines on the identification, protection, and assistance of victims of labour exploitation in agriculture**, approved in October 2021 as part of the above-mentioned Three-Year Plan.

### 3.1.2. Multilevel governance arrangements

As in the previous section, we can distinguish the governance arrangements around reception and those around general integration policies.

SAI and CAS follow completely different governance arrangements. **SAI represents a clear instance of multi-level governance** where both the central government and the municipalities are involved, with the latter taking the initiative. In contrast, **CAS facilities follow a top-down dynamic driven by Prefectures with little room of manoeuvre for local authorities**. The prevalence of CAS over SAI facilities resulted in a centralisation of decision-making over reception triggered by the so-called European refugee crisis (Ponzo, Giannetto and Roman 2022; Caponio and Ponzo 2022).

Yet, **consultation between Prefecture and local authorities over CAS has increased over time**. Initially as a result of single prefectures' autonomous initiatives and then as a consequence of the Ministry of the Interior's request. Moreover, Regional Working Groups on Asylum, informally set up during the North Africa Emergency (2011-2013), were recognised as ordinary components of the multi-level governance of reception by the Agreement signed by the Unified Conference State-Regions-Local Authorities on 10 July 2014. They gather different institutions (region, provinces, municipalities, local prefectures, *Questure*, and regional branch of National Association of Italian Municipalities) with the purpose of coordinating and monitoring governmental reception at the regional level. However, the actual functioning of the Regional Coordinating Groups depends largely on the key actors' willingness to act, and therefore it has varied over time and across the country (Ponzo, Giannetto, Roman 2022). Following the Bari Agreement that fixed the quota of asylum seekers and refugees per inhabitant (see section 3.1.1.1), the Ministry of the Interior asked Prefectures to improve the dialogue with local authorities in order to agree upon the number of asylum seekers to be hosted in each municipality and the modes of reception. This has in fact become a rather usual practice in a large part of the country (ANCI et al. 2017). On the other hand, given that the fair redistribution of asylum seekers was driven by the new Agreement, the Regional Working Groups on Asylum lost relevance.

Shifting to general integration policies, Law 40/1998 required regions to draft, in collaboration with local tiers of government, specific immigrant integration programs to be financed by the National Fund for Migrant Policy established by the Law itself. Yet, the constitutional reform passed in May 2001 assigned full autonomy on matters of social policy, including immigrant integration, to the regions. Parallel to that, in 2003, the National Fund for Migrant Policies was merged with the National Fund for Social Policies so that the regions could decide what share of the latter would be



devoted to migrant integration<sup>14</sup>. As a consequence, the **decision to deliver specific plans on migrant integration**, promote initiatives in this field and devote economic resources to this **has been up to the individual regions producing a rather heterogeneous situation** across the country (Campomori and Caponio 2012).

As highlighted by a high-officer of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, this large independence of the regions undermines the efforts of the central government to develop an integration plan for migrants in general or post-2014 migrants in particular.

*“As far as my administration since 2015-2016 is concerned, since the social and labour competencies are of the regions, we tried to work with them by making governance agreements that put together social, labour and immigration, within which to channel the AMIF resources that, as a delegated authority, we received. This has worked very poorly: except for two or three regions where these areas would have dialogued anyway, in the other regions there has been no dialogue on these issues (...) In a country where the regions have more autonomy, it would have taken a discussion among the regions on how to set up future social-work inclusion programs in a coordinated way. This has not been discussed” (I-ITA-2, Officer of the DG Immigration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies)*

A further obstacle in the relations between the central government and the regions is that the **Conference of Regions**, which is the representative body of Italian regions, has always faced **difficulties in finding common positions** since political instances generally prevail, even more so on such a hot issue as migration. Instead, the **relation between the central government and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) is tighter and smoother**. This has been explained by the interviewees with both the more pragmatic approach of the municipalities as responsible for the provision of reception and welfare services, and the substantial independence and poor representativeness of ANCI with respect to local authorities so that it does not convey political divergences. Hence, the involvement of ANCI in migrant integration governance cannot be easily understood as an engagement of municipalities and a clear instance of MLG.

*“Concerning the regions, I have noticed this fragmentation and lack of coordination. They took turns to participate in the meetings, but they did not speak with one voice, on behalf of the other regions, too (...). In this effort [for revising the National Plan for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection], ANCI has done a good job, but in ANCI representatives I see a technical approach rather than a political agenda.” (I-ITA-1, Country Office of international organisation)*

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<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the structural funds for social policies - which since 2001 include integration policies - have undergone considerable cuts, leaving the regions with decreasing resources to undertake measures for immigrant integration (Caponio 2014).



*“There is the Conference of Regions. Those issues [integration of post-2014 migrants] are dealt with by the Commission of Social Policies. That said, the regions are twenty and I do not think the same things that Calabria thinks. Therefore, I understand that the Ministry struggles to summarise not a single voice but many different inputs: summarising so many diverse requests across the country is not easy” (I-P-1, Regional officer)*

*“My impression is that the regions differ also on other issues but certainly they differ over this issue [migration]. It is a complex issue where to find a synthesis is impossible, because of the positions, but also because of the different situations, I’m thinking of the needs of Sicily compared to those of the other regions (...) The Ministry favoured the involvement of ANCI and not of the regions, given that the municipalities were those with management tasks (...) The regions, that did not manage services, had a more ideological approach” (I-P-2, Regional Councillor)*

Finally, it is worth considering that the attention for SMTRA is still poor, although increasing. In this regard, one of the interviewees affirmed that the accusations against the Mayor of Riace for the bad management of the local SPRAR project had negative consequences on that debate.

*Q: “Regarding integration, has there been any discussion about the differences between large cities and small municipalities?”*

*“I have noticed that the Ministry of Labour is aware of this aspect when it comes to labour inclusion. Same for ANCI for other aspects, although they are concerned with reception, and, therefore, also the housing situation of small towns. There has been a discussion on how to account for these differences, but it is not structured (...). In my opinion, there is an awareness of the existing dynamics and differences. But I had the impression that the criminalization of the Riace model has blocked any interest in exploring whether citizenship responses to housing and labour problems in small realities have had any impact. There is a general awareness about this need, but ANCI has not taken over the dialogue yet, and I have not grasped any general will to do so either. We hope we can do it.” (I-ITA-1, Country Office of international organisation)*

Those complex relations have to be understood in a context where there are **no formal venues or arrangements of MLG over migrant integration, rather issue-based working groups** (es. those on the National Plan for Integration of beneficiaries of International Protection, on gamestering in agriculture, on AMIF programme and its implementation, etc). This implies that the degree of cooperation between levels of government largely depends on the willingness of the different actors to participate and actually share decisions.

*“The Ministry has set up several tables of consultation, in order to be updated, to understand what interventions it would be better to do. Perhaps there are too many consultations, tables, of which it is sometimes difficult to see the final concrete outcomes. The contact [with the central government]*



*exists, the consultation is there, I do not know to what extent this positively evolves in accepting specific proposals” (I-P-1, Regional officer)*

**At a lower institutional level, there are no venues to discuss migrant integration among municipalities and between municipalities and regions.** Hence, **Prefectures stand out not only as connecting elements between the national and the local governments but also as central nodes at local level.** Indeed, the Prefectures summon the Territorial Councils for Immigration, established by the Law 40/1998 in each Italian province, gathering local public and non-profit entities as well as employers’ and workers’ organisations, and tasked with monitoring the presence of foreign residents, identifying problems and promoting solutions and initiatives in the field of integration. Actually, in most Italian provinces, those Councils are not particularly active and do not play a significant role. Nevertheless, this institutional role, together with the establishment of the above-mentioned Regional Working Groups on Asylum and the fact that, in 2014-2020 AMIF national programme, Prefectures have become leaders of AMIF-fund projects, have led to a substantial enhancement of their role in migrant integration.

*“The Prefectures have passed from a role related to the management of migrants’ legal status and conditions, before 2015, to a bigger role with regard to interventions in social fields (....) In the last few years, they have improved their competences (....) There have been substantial steps forward with regard to social dynamics and planning, that were unknown fields for them in the past; now they engage with this dimension, with the network of social services, with the issues of housing, employment and social inclusion. This is a positive evolution in my opinion. The Prefecture, being a node of the central government at local level, can be a connecting element between local institutions and social services, on one hand, and the Ministry of Interior, on the other hand (...) Many times the Prefectures have moved spontaneously, or after central government’s inputs, or urged from the bottom, by the mayors. Like it or not, they got involved and their role has become more central and operative” (I-P-1, Regional officer)*

### 3.1.3. Implementation and funding

In terms of funding, **with the decrease of national funds devoted to migrant integration, EU funds** which pass through the national governments, such as the above-mentioned ESF and AMIF, **have gained increasing relevance** in providing resources for integration policies. The large dependence on the EU Funds could potentially enhance the impact of EU guidelines about migrant integration on the national system. Actually, the room for manoeuvre of the national states - and also of the sub-national levels of governments - is high, as highlighted by a high officer of an international organisation assisting the Italian government over migrant matters.

*“To be sure, the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion is the same for everybody and Italy recognises those priorities. Still, when it comes to redistributing resources and reinforcing existing*



*systems, political dynamics come into play. This is true for both the national and the regional level, and also for the municipalities” (I-ITA-1, Country Office of international organisation)*

The shift from national structural funds to calls for projects channelling EU funds has produced relevant **consequences on integration measures**. First, the latter largely **depend on the willingness and ability of regional and local actors** to submit successful projects so that resources are distributed according to local actors’ characteristics rather than on foreign population’s needs. Second, the management of **project-based initiatives and their financial reporting seem to be a major obstacle in accessing and using those resources**. Indeed, we have to consider the structural differences between Italian regions in terms of state capacity and resources coming from local taxation, with a neat cleavage between North and South of Italy.

*“On the one hand, we have a region like Sicily that is willing to collaborate, but has a very weak network of services: despite its commitment, it has poor territorial resources. Plus, there is a huge emigration of qualified workers. In Piedmont, services work together and create networks. There are also geographical differences (...). Regions have a lot of funds given by the European Commission and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, but they do not manage to have a good planning of activities and resources (...). The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies want to give AMIF funds to regions but regions have difficulties with financial statements and advance payments” (ITA-I-1, Country Office of international organisation)*

### 3.1.4. The regional level

#### 3.1.4.1. Piedmont

Within the context of Italian regions’ autonomy and different stances over migrant integration, Piedmont Region kept issuing specific plans and devoting specific resources to migrant integration till **2010, when the Northern League won the regional elections** (Campomori and Caponio 2012). **Since then, neither specific plans or funds have been devoted to migrant integration. Hence, economic resources for migrant integration have entirely come from projects**, mainly funded with European resources channelled through the national government. Despite those difficulties, the **centre-left government that ruled from 2014 to 2019 has been particularly active around migrant integration**, and the region won several competing national AMIF bids and, combining those resources with the European Social Fund, **started several projects**. In June 2019, a centre-right coalition led by the League won the regional elections. This change in political majority has produced a disengagement of the political level over migration and a substantial drop of the exchanges with local authorities and stakeholders in this regard. Projects have generally continued thanks to the dedication of the officers and the technical level.



*“The region’s role can extend or withdraw as a rubber band, depending on the situation, political orientations and sensibilities. The region can do a lot, be more incisive, seek closer forms of cooperation, promote initiatives or stay at the window. Lately we are carrying out projects but without pressing on the accelerator (...) We follow national lines, to a certain extent it is right. Now the Ministry of Interior is focusing on labour exploitation, many resources are devoted to this issue and we have followed those indications, we are drafting projects on this topic, those are not regions’ own objectives (...) Cuneo is at the table [on seasonal workers], in these last years this has been a phenomenon that has concerned Cuneo. In Novara we have in fact less tight networks” (I-P-1, regional officer)*

The large majority of projects has aimed to support local actors through capacity building and the promotion of innovative practices to foster migrants’ access to mainstream welfare services and the labour market. **Alongside those limited-in-time projects, three strands show a greater continuity**, partially because of a certain stability of funds coming from the central government and a certain support from both centre-left and centre-right coalitions: **language learning, anti-discrimination and the fight against human trafficking**. In Piedmont the AMIF-funded Regional Plan for civic-linguistic training of Third Country Nationals is named “Petrarca” and has reached its eighth edition. In the field of anti-discrimination, the agreement between National Office for Racial Anti-discrimination (UNAR) and the Piedmont Region to develop a network of regional and local antennas for preventing and combating discrimination and supporting victims, signed in 2011 and suspended in 2014, was resumed by the centre-left regional government in 2017. Moreover, this “Regional network against discrimination” has been acknowledged by the Regional Law 6 passed in 2016 on “Rules on forbidding any form of discrimination and on equal treatment in those subjects of regional competence”. Those initiatives were complemented by the AMIF-funded project “Piedmont against Discrimination” focused on training, information and awareness-raising (2016-2018). After 2018 no other AMIF bids on this topic were issued. Hence, the center-right regional majority that got in power in 2019 employed regional funds to continue the activity started with “Piedmont Against Discrimination”. Finally, as part of the “National Plan against human trafficking and severe exploitation, the region implemented the project “The strong ring: network against the human trafficking of Piedmont and Aosta Valley” for the outreach, protection and reception of victims of trafficking. The project, which is led by the region (and it is not the case in all the regions) and has now reached the third edition, receives funding from the central government in 15-month instalments, and is implemented in both Cuneo and Novara.

Moreover, during the centre-left government, the region was very **active in fighting the gang master system** in agriculture. Following the approval of the national law against the gangmaster system no 199/2016, on March 1 2019, the region signed the “Protocol for the promotion of regular work in agriculture”<sup>15</sup> with all the regional Prefectures, several non-profit organisations, the regional branches of the Direction for Labour Policies, the National Institute for Social Security (INPS), the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL), and the National Association of

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<sup>15</sup> Deliberazione della Giunta Regionale 1 marzo 2019, n. 39-8502





Italian Municipalities. Given that the Protocol had no funds for its implementation, the next year the region promoted the AMIF-funded project “Good Land” (2020-2022) to make up for the lack of economic resources. “Good Land” is aimed at informing and accommodating migrant seasonal workers, orienting them to local services, supporting the match between labour demand and supply and fighting irregular employment, raising awareness about social agriculture among employers. Unfortunately, the Protocol has not been renewed by the centre-right regional majority that got in power in 2019. Hence, a smaller-size Protocol has been signed by the Prefecture and some municipalities in the province of Cuneo, one of the largest agricultural districts of the country, and the project “Good Land” has then been used to fund this provincial protocol.

Another major strand of activities **addressed the situation of unaccompanied minors**. The region, in cooperation with the University of Turin, played a big role in activating, training and supporting the voluntary guardianship foreseen by the national Law 47/2017 (see section 3.1.1.1).

Finally, the centre-left **Councillor for Equal Opportunities**, who held the competences over migration, showed great activism over integration. She **participated in the public debate to promote a progressive view** over migration and contrast the wide-spreading xenophobic attitudes increasing with the European refugee crisis. In this regard, the region was very vocal against the policies promoted by the Ministry of Interior Matteo Salvini and even appealed the 2018 Decree on Security and Migration in front of the Court. At the same time, the Deputy Mayor drafted a bill to reform the regional law on migrant integration that dates back to 1989. However, the bill was opposed by members of the Regional Council for the fear of losing consensus and did not pass. It is worth underling that its drafting was accompanied by periodic consultations with the Forum of new citizens (*Forum dei nuovi cittadini e nuove cittadine*) made up of migrant associations and established with the specific purpose of hearing foreign citizens’ proposals concerning the bill. Yet, post-2014 migrants were marginal in this process since at that time their involvement in local associations was almost none. Because of the above-mentioned lack of institutionalised MLG venues connecting the regional and local level, also the involvement of the municipalities was poor.

#### 3.1.4.2. Sicily

In the last years, regional integration policies and governance in Sicily have gone through **two key phases**. The first phase lasted between 2014 and 2015. It was an **emergency phase during which the region had to respond to the reception and protection needs of UAMs** arriving in Sicily. The role of the region was limited to the coordination of municipalities to provide UAMs reception services. In addition to this, during this first stage, the region participated in small-scale actions through the Local Policies and Family Department and instituted a regional register of reception facilities for UAMs.

*“The only thing that gave the idea that the region was doing something was linked solely and exclusively to the regional register of first and second reception facilities for unaccompanied minors. This was the activity that engaged the department. Unaccompanied minors, for us this was an emergency until the scenario changed. This does not mean that there were no activities by the*



*municipalities and by other subjects, but we as the region in that period until 2018 had to deal with that.” (I-S-1, Regional officer)*

The **second phase** of regional integration policies was marked by the end of emergency response and by **establishment of the Special Immigration Office**. The latter is in charge of the implementation of policies related to the first and second reception of UAMs and liaises with other institutions involved in integration policies. The new course of regional integration policies saw the involvement of the region in projects with other Southern regions, including PON, AMIF.

In particular, actions focused on **tackling agricultural labour exploitation** at the regional level have been funded through funds of the Ministry of Labour (PON Inclusion) and have regarded housing support initiatives, multifunctional service centres, interventions to address the situation of informal settlements in Cassibile, Castelvetro and Campobello di Mazara. Other activities targeting UAMs, such as language training, anti-trafficking initiatives, were funded within the PRISMA programme promoted by the Ministry of Labour.

Another set of important actions funded through AMIF funds regarded **capacity building**. The COM.IN. (*Competences for Integration*) project, now in its fourth edition, aims at consolidating competences and fostering policy coherence between the local and regional level, and the national and EU level. Importantly, the project has become a platform of cooperation between the five Southern regions which take part in it, namely Puglia, the lead beneficiary, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania and Sicily.

While, during the first phase, the region used the National Fund for Migrant Policies, the second stage saw the use of AMIF and PON funds. As it happens in Piedmont, no other specific regional funds exist, although some funding has also occasionally come from the Equal Opportunities Department.

Overall, the shift away from the emergency mode and towards the establishment of partnerships at the local and inter-regional level have allowed the region to carry out more specific and targeted actions. This process has been further supported by the **adoption of the regional Law on Immigration and Social Inclusion of Foreigners**. The new law was unanimously approved by the Sicilian Regional Assembly in July 2021. It is composed of a set of provisions covering different aspects of inclusion such as healthcare, education, housing, the role of local authorities and NGOs. Within the limits of regional competencies, the law provides for supplementary interventions to support the right to asylum, particularly regarding UAMs. Importantly, the law also provides for the establishment of a list of cultural mediators, determining the recognition of a central professional figure in the reception and inclusion sector and partially filling a regulatory gap that over the years has made the protection of those working in this sector fragile. Lastly, Article 18 contains measures to take gangmaster system and labour exploitation.

*“Today we can talk about more specific interventions. All this is about to be reproduced in the implementation of the 2021 Law on Immigration and Social Inclusion that requires us to bring all*



*these activities to the new programming, which we hope to see partially refinanced. We are working with other regions on this to implement consolidated policies.” (I-S-1, Regional officer)*

During this second, ongoing phase, the **region has been attempting to establish partnerships and collaboration mechanisms with municipalities and prefectures, other regions, and NGOs**. The region’s relations with municipalities and Prefectures vary depending on the province. In Siracusa’s area, for example, relations are seen as cooperative and conducive to impactful initiatives. As illustrated in the rest of this report, the proactive role of the progressive local administration in Siracusa is the main factor allowing for this fruitful cooperation with the regional level.

*“We always have a strong link with the municipalities there. This councillorship was called “of the local authorities,” so it has a natural relationship with all the municipalities of Sicily in the social field. The relationship with the municipality of Syracuse, especially in this last period, has seen a strong collaboration, also with the Prefect. We have been recognised as a good practice in overcoming the informal camp of Cassibile, which was an open wound in the territory. Collaboration with the Prefecture and in conjunction with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour made it possible to overcome that informal settlement and create a formal structured settlement to welcome workers who have been able to benefit from an adequate reception since last year.” (I-S-1, Regional officer)*

Like the Province of Siracusa, the Province of Ragusa, where Acate and Santa Croce Camerina are located, is also regarded as **being proactive and with stronger links with the region**.

*“Ragusa has always been the most advanced province for us. In 2014, with the National Fund for Migrant Policies, we activated the Poli-Services Centre that, of all the multifunctional centres financed by the PON, the only one active was precisely that of Ragusa. As a multifunctional centre it has always been considered a good practice because within that structure some services were detached, among which the Employment Centre, the Province, the municipality, which offered people the possibility to obtain services without having to move around the city. Among other things, with this system of access to services we were also able to test the attention there was on the ground with the collaboration of the municipalities with the Prefecture and the third sector.” (I-S-1, Regional Officer)*

Unlike the case of Ragusa where collaboration between the municipality, the Prefecture and the region has worked well, in the province of Catania, where Caltagirone is located, relations are not as collaborative, mostly due to the lack of a strong local network. In the words of the regional representative:



*“Catania is a very specific province and has a large number of third sector actors, but as far as we know, there is not much collaboration between the different actors. The prefecture does not collaborate much with the municipalities, the cities are not very bright except for Caltagirone and other small towns.” (I-S-1, Regional officer)*

When it comes to relations between the region and NGOs, the **region is currently working on establishing stronger partnerships with NGOs, unions and employers’ organisations** on the matter of tackling agricultural labour exploitation. This is happening mostly through PON Inclusion and PON Legality funds which have allowed the region to tie stronger field partnerships with local-level actors. In this respect, the region sees itself as also being in charge of finding the funding to support local initiatives and continue on the productive path of collaboration experienced through the PON projects.

In general, the **region is still at an early stage of developing these partnership mechanisms**. Capacity building projects, like COM.IN., are seen as a particularly useful platform to bridge the gap in capacity and in relations with municipalities, NGOs, public and private service providers. Through this platform, more specifically, the region has been implementing the above-mentioned 2021 Law on Immigration and Social Inclusion 2021, particularly through the definition of a Three-year Immigration Plan which is currently being discussed.

*“We have recently started to play an important role. We are working on the Regional Law 2021 and on the definition of the general lines of the Three-year Immigration Plan. (...) We are working on the plan, taking the opportunity to work with these experts through COMIN 4 to lay the foundations of the three-year plan. When we have the first lines we will share them with the other subjects, through a widespread collaboration established through the working groups of the project with municipalities, third sector, employment centres, public and private operators.” (I-S-1, Regional officer)*

This brief overview of the regional context of integration policies in Sicily suggests that, since 2014, this region has transitioned from a coordinating role with respect to emergency reception, particularly of UAMs, to elaborating a more comprehensive strategy for integration, also through the use of AMIF funds. This has regarded the establishment of partnerships both at the local and at the inter-regional level, allowing for more specific and targeted actions



Table 1: Overview main policies and actors

	RELEVANT POLICIES/LAWS	YEAR OF ENACTMENT	MAIN ACTORS INVOLVED	ROLE/ RESPONSIBILITY OF ACTORS	FUNDING?
<b>NATIONAL LEVEL</b>	SAI reception policies (Law 189/2002, Legislative Decree 113/2018, Decree 130/2020)	2002, with modifications in 2018 and 2020	Ministry of Interior, Municipalities. NGOs	Ministry of Interior: funding, setting the guidelines, issuing calls for reception projects; Municipalities: elaborating and submitting reception projects; NGOs: reception service providers	National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services; National Fund for the Reception of Unaccompanied Minors
	CAS governmental reception system (Legislative Decree 140/2005, Legislative Decree 113/2018)	2005, 2018	Ministry of Interior, Prefectures, Municipalities and NGOs	Ministry of Interior: funding, setting the guidelines; Prefectures: issuing calls for outsourcing the reception services; Municipalities and NGOs: reception service providers	National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services
	General framework law on integration: Law 40/1998 as reformed by the Constitutional Reform in 2001	1998, 2001	Regions, Municipalities, NGOs	Regions: planning and funding; Municipalities and NGOs: developing integration projects	All kinds of funds. Specific funds: National Fund for Migrant Policies; National Fund for Social Policies
	Civic-linguistic training of Third Country Nationals	every year	Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education and Research; Regions; Provincial Centres for Adult Education	Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education and Research: planning and funding; Regions: project leaders; Regional Education Offices: partners; Provincial Centres for Adult Education: implementing actors	AMIF funds
<b>REGIONAL LEVEL</b>	Project-based initiatives addressing integration of third-country nationals	every year	Central government, Region, Municipalities, professional NGOs	Central government: funding, setting guidelines; Regions: project leaders; Municipalities and NGOs: implementing actors	EU funds channelled through the central government (eg AMIF, ESF)



	Piedmont: Regional network against discrimination	2017	National Office for Racial Anti-discrimination; central government, Region; public and non -public local organisation	National Office for Racial Anti-discrimination: drafting guidelines; central government: funding; Region: funding, planning; public and non -public local organisations: implementing actors	AMIF fund, Regional funds
	Sicily: Special Immigration Office	2015	Region, Family, Social Policies and Labour Department	Implementation of UAMs' integration policies, coordination with other regional and local entities	EU funds
	Sicily: Regional Law on Immigration and Social Inclusion of Foreigners	2021	Region, Municipalities, NGOs	Regions: planning and funding; Municipalities and NGOs: implementation	Various funds
<b>LOCAL LEVEL</b>	Project-based initiatives addressing integration of third-country nationals	Every year	Central government, Region, Municipalities, professional NGOs	Central government: funding, setting guidelines; Regions: project leaders; Municipalities and NGOs: project leaders and partners or implementing actors	EU funds channelled through the central government (eg AMIF, ESF)
	Piedmontese localities	Periodic	Bank foundations, Municipalities, professional and voluntary-based NGOs	Bank foundations: funding, setting guidelines; Municipalities and NGOs: project leaders and partners	Funding from bank foundations
	Sicilian localities	Periodic	Professional and voluntary-based NGOs	NGOs: funders and service providers; Municipality and NGOs: partners	NGO funds

### 3.2 The local case studies

The Table below illustrates the main features of the target localities in terms of economic trends, political majorities, population and presence of foreigners.

*Table 2: Main features of the target localities*

	<b>Novara</b>	<b>Cuneo</b>	<b>Avigliana</b>	<b>Siracusa</b>	<b>Caltagirone</b>	<b>Acate</b>
<b>Region</b>	Piedmont	Piedmont	Piedmont	Sicily	Sicily	Sicily
<b>Local political tradition and political majorities</b>	Conservative  Centre-left (2011-2016)  Right-wing (2016-2021)	Progressive  Centre-left (2012-2017)  Centre-left (2017-2022)	Progressive  Centre-left (2012-2017)  Centre-left (2017-2022)	Progressive  Centre-left (2013-2018)  Centre-left (2018-present)	Conservative  Centre-right (2012-2016)  Centre-right (2016-2021)	Conservative  Centre-right (2013-2018)  Centre-right (2018-present)
<b>Inhabitants (01/01/2022) and classification by size</b>	Medium town  101,727	Small town  55,800	Rural area  12,328	Medium town  117,053	Small town  36,241	Rural area  10,620
<b>Number of foreign residents (01/01/2022)</b>	15,662	6,800	623	5,599	1,253	3,139
<b>Share of foreign residents (01/01/2005)</b>	6.6%	4.8%	3.4%	1.5%	1.0%	5.9%
<b>Share of foreign residents (01/01/2022)</b>	15.4%	12.2%	5.0%	4.8%	3.5%	29.6%
<b>Main nationalities</b>	Morocco Pakistan Albania	Romania Albania China	Romania Morocco Albania	Sri Lanka Morocco Romania	Romania Sri Lanka Albania	Romania Tunisia Morocco



### 3.2.1. Novara

Novara is a provincial capital, it is a conservative medium-sized town. This locality is characterised by a stagnating demographic trend (from 2005 to 2014), and a significant pre-2014 presence of foreigners. It has been traditionally governed by a conservative coalition. However, the sequence of right-wing governments was interrupted in 2012-2016 when a centre-left coalition led by the Democratic Party was in power. This was a short exception since right-wing coalitions led by the League won the subsequent local elections held in 2016 and 2021.

The largest immigrant communities in the town are Moroccans, Pakistanis and Albanians; the percentage of foreign residents has risen from 6.5% in 2005 to 15.4% in 2021 (see Table 2). In the provincial area, the number of asylum seekers hosted in the CAS system increased from 215 in 2014 to 763 in 2015 and to 1190 in 2016. The majority of asylum seekers hosted in that period in the province's CAS system came from West Africa (Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Guinea), also with a significant number of migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh. The clear majority of these migrants were men. More than half of post-2014 migrants were hosted in the city of Novara. Initially the arrival of hundreds of migrants, young single adults mostly of sub-Saharan origin, has led to the occurrence of some episodes of alarm and fear among local citizens.

**Among post-2014 migrants, unaccompanied minors (UAMs) are a relevant group** in Novara which ranks second in Piedmont in this regard. The flow of UAMs increased significantly after 2014 (with a peak in 2016-2017 when they reached around 100 units) and has different characteristics from that of adults. The majority of them is made up of **Albanian and Egyptian teenagers** who autonomously report their presence in the town to the local institutions.

The **arrival of post-2014 migrants does not seem to have had any significant impact in demographic terms**. Instead, some interviewees point to the demographic impact of earlier migratory flows that have arrived since the 1990s. The limited impact of post-2014 migrants is also due to the fact that a large share of them have moved from Novara to larger cities that offer more job opportunities and the possibility for irregular migrants to stay invisible. This phenomenon is partially explained with the high share of post-2014 who saw their asylum claims rejected and consequently fell into irregularity (50%-60% of claims were rejected from 2016 to 2021) and with the fact that only those post-2014 migrants who find a job already during the reception phase generally remain in the area.

However, there are **also inflows of post-2014 migrants, mainly Pakistani and Bengali, who spent the reception phase elsewhere and have been attracted to Novara by the new employment opportunities related to the logistic enterprises** that are multiplying in the province. In this regard, interviewees from private companies, trade unions and training agencies highlight the exploitative conditions that characterise this sector.





### 3.2.2. Cuneo

Cuneo, being the provincial capital of the most well-off province of Piedmont, is a small-size town. Although the province is generally right-wing, Cuneo, like all the other major towns of the area, has always been ruled by progressive coalitions.

As shown in Table 2, the share of foreign population has substantially increased since 2005. Whereas old-established migrants, according to the interviewees, have been significantly affecting the demographic and economic situation because they started families and got stable jobs, it is not generally the case for post-2014 migrants who are regarded as fewer, mainly single, and with precarious jobs.

Moreover, the impact of **post-2014 migrants** on the local community is hard to assess because of their **sizable outflows and inflows**. The data on movements are lacking but interviewees believe that a large share of people hosted in local reception facilities since 2014, have left the municipality to reach other European countries or larger Italian cities where employment opportunities are higher and ethnic networks are stronger. On the other hand, each year, from March to October the province hosts around 12,000 seasonal workers employed in agriculture, the large majority of which are post-2014 migrants who have replaced previously arrived migrants by accepting lower wages. They are much more vulnerable than their predecessors and a part of them arrive in the province of Cuneo without concrete opportunities of employment and/or accommodation so that the **number of homeless seasonal workers have significantly increased** over the last years raising concern among the local population and stakeholders. At the very beginning this phenomenon was limited to the “fruit district” of Saluzzo, located around 30 kilometres away from Cuneo, but since 2018-2019 it has concerned Cuneo as well, because of the expansion of the fruit cultivation in the surroundings and a sort of magnet effect due to the greater opportunities in terms of services and social networking. The management of this group of migrant population has been at the centre of the public debate and local integration policies over the last years.

### 3.2.3. Avigliana and surrounding villages

Avigliana and surrounding villages<sup>16</sup> are a rural area located in the lower Susa Valley, 30 kilometres away from the regional capital, Turin. They have been governed with continuity by progressive coalitions (see Tabel 2.2). In Avigliana, the coalition that was in power in 2012-2017 was re-elected in 2017 (albeit with a different mayoral candidate). The local community is characterised by its **vibrant cultural and social climate**, and is known for the decades-long battle of the NO TAV

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<sup>16</sup> The surrounding villages included in our analysis are the following: Buttigliera Alta, S.Ambrogio di Torino and Almese.



movement<sup>17</sup>. This has also taken the form of **pro-migrant activism** involving associations and private citizens.

The Susa Valley encompasses municipalities of very different sizes, from a few dozen to thousands of inhabitants, with Avigliana being the largest one. This area shows also a high heterogeneity in terms of economic development, with a prevailing touristic economy in the upper Valley and a significant presence of metalworking factories in the lower Valley<sup>18</sup>. **For the majority of the survey's respondents, the economic situation in the area has worsened over time**, because of the lasting effects of the deindustrialisation process and the repercussions of the pandemic crisis. Despite this, they generally believe that the demographic trend is positive.

The Valley, being located at the border with France, has always been a land of passage, from the pilgrimages of the past centuries to the recent flows of migrants. Indeed, for the majority of survey's respondents Avigliana has significant experience in terms of exchange with different cultures notwithstanding that the share of foreign residents is significantly lower than the national average. Almost all interviewees mention that Avigliana and the Susa Valley have got a long experience with immigration, referring to the settlement of Moroccans and Albanians in the 1990s<sup>19</sup>.

The **presence of post-2014 migrants in the Susa Valley is smaller** and has changed over time. Indeed, **many post-2014 migrants have left the locality after the reception phase**, especially those whose asylum applications were rejected and who became irregular<sup>20</sup>. Single young men - both regular and irregular - tend to look for opportunities in bigger cities or abroad, unless they find a job during the reception phase, while families tend to move less frequently, especially if they are single-parent families, with children at school.

According to a report of Intersos<sup>21</sup>, the Susa Valley had among the highest percentages of UAMs by inhabitants in 2017 (0.77 per 1000 inhabitants). The rate of exit from residential facilities was around 75%, because young migrants tend to leave the country and cross the border with France. At the same time, local policies aimed at fostering the integration of the minority of young migrants who remained have expanded.

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<sup>17</sup> No TAV protest movement originated in the early 1990s among the inhabitants of the Susa Valley (Turin), who declared their opposition to the construction of the Turin-Lyon high-speed railway line, considered a waste of public money and harmful to the territory.

<sup>18</sup> See: Mauri B., Tenchini S. (2019), *La micro-accoglienza diffusa dei richiedenti protezione Internazionale in Valle di Susa* in Welfare Oggi, n.6, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> The largest migrant communities in Avigliana are Romanian, Moroccans, and Albanians. See Table 2.

<sup>20</sup> As it is also reported, during interviews, by those who have worked in the shelter aimed at assisting migrants who try to cross the border with France.

<sup>21</sup> See: Intersos (2017), *I minori stranieri non accompagnati lungo il confine settentrionale*, <https://www.intersos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Rapporto-MSNA.pdf>



The interviewees generally believe that post-2014 migrants, who were distributed in small numbers among the different municipalities of the Valley, have not had a significant impact on the area either in demographic or economic terms.

### 3.2.4. Siracusa

Siracusa is a medium-size town and the capital of the homonymous province. The number of its inhabitants has not changed in the time frame considered (2005-2014), showing a stagnating demographic trend. As for the parties in local government, this locality has been ruled by centre-left parties consistently since 2013 and its political tradition can be regarded as progressive.

Siracusa is the southernmost province of the Sicilian East coast. It attracts migrants both for its geographic positioning, being close to major arrival points, and for the employment opportunities that it offers, mainly in the agri-food industry and tourism. Recent migration flows consist of applicants for international protection reaching the locality through the central Mediterranean route. **Between 2014 and 2016, arrivals increased**, putting additional pressure on reception facilities and prompting the response from NGOs and the local administration. Despite the lack of statistics, anecdotal evidence emerged during interviews with local fieldworkers and practitioners suggesting that migrants **tend to leave this locality after the reception period** to reunite with family or seek better opportunities in Northern Italy or elsewhere in Europe. Still, according to most interviewees, **those post-2014 migrants who have stayed in the locality are well integrated into the local social fabric.**

The success of inclusion processes is attributed to the **proactive role of the progressive local administration and the rich support network for post-2014 migrants.** First of all, the local administration has initiated or is leading several initiatives and inclusion projects targeting, in particular, labour exploitation and UAMs protection. Secondly, NGOs are very active in providing integration support, working in cooperation and continuity with reception facilities located in the neighbouring municipalities. As for other support networks for post-2014 migrants, in two central neighbourhoods of this locality (Borgata Santa Lucia and Ortigia), there are large diaspora communities who serve as first contact points for newcomers.

The area surrounding Siracusa presents a higher presence of agricultural workers, including seasonal ones. The situation regarding inclusion and locals' attitudes in the outskirts of the city is remarkably different from the one in the municipality, with occasional tensions around the agricultural centre Cassibile and its encampment hosting seasonal workers.

**Overall, in Siracusa, post-2014 migration is perceived as having had a largely positive impact in both economic and social terms.** Migrants are seen as having provided low-skilled labour supply in sectors in which native Italians are less and less interested, especially agriculture, which makes up for an important part of the local economy. In demographic terms, the presence of migrants is also perceived as a factor that counterbalances low natality rates and emigration among the native population. Last but not least, interviews have highlighted that migration and the local response to it have revived the local social fabric by **mobilising civil society** around specific inclusion-related issues (e.g. the protection of UAMs).



### 3.2.5. Caltagirone

With a population of almost 40.000, Caltagirone is classified as a small town located in the province of Catania. Compared to the rest of the country, the number of its inhabitants has decreased as young residents have moved elsewhere to seek better employment opportunities (see Tabel 1.2).

The **issue of brain drain and lack of attractive employment opportunities** is deeply felt by local residents who generally view the area as less and less vital, both in economic and in social terms. For the **majority of interviewees, the economic situation in the area has become worse since 2014**, even more so after the pandemic.

In this respect, **locals view the arrival of third-country nationals as positive, both in demographic and economic terms**. In demographic terms, locals perceive migration before 2014 as having a positive impact on natality rates. With respect to the local economy, migration is deemed to provide much-needed labour force in key economic sectors, namely agriculture and pottery, as well as elderly care. The agricultural and elderly care sectors, in particular, are reliant almost exclusively on migrant labour.

Despite these generally positive attitudes, in Caltagirone there is **little social mixing** and interactions between migrants and other residents are limited to workplaces.

Caltagirone hosts municipal reception facilities and support services for post-2014 migrants, including both facilities for single adults and for UAMs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that **only a small share of post-2014 migrants hosted in reception facilities have stayed in the area**, finding employment in the agricultural, manufacturing, or food sector. Being located close to the more prosperous centres of Catania, Siracusa and Ragusa, this locality is not regarded as a major attraction point for migrants, although their presence is regarded as being a stable feature of the local demographics already before 2014.

Since 2012, this locality has been administered by centre-right parties and its **political tradition can be described as conservative, although the issue of migrants' integration has never been politicised**.

### 3.2.6. Acate and Santa Croce Camerina

Acate is the main locality considered by this research in this rural area. In the period considered by this research, the number of inhabitants has grown by 27.18%, significantly more than in the rest of the country and of the region (see Table 2). This variation is explained almost exclusively by the demographic impact of migration in the area. As of today, this locality has a share of foreign residents of around 33%, and this figure is likely to be an underestimation of the real presence of foreign-born residents due to patchy residency registration.

This rural area hosts a high number of post-2014 migrants as well as foreign-born population which has been present in the area for several years, in some cases for over a decade. The territory is composed of an extremely vast rural area with a large number of foreign-born residents living in greenhouse fields, far from villages.



The **two main problems faced by post-2014 migrants are labour and housing exploitation**. Labour exploitation has been the main target of several national initiatives (see Section 4.1.6). Housing exploitation is still a pressing problem. Agricultural workers usually find accommodation through informal housing arrangements on private land, in the fields, in areas that are inaccessible to authorities and NGOs, and in facilities that are not apt for the purpose (garages, stables, etc.).

The **presence of third-country nationals is largely accepted as the norm in the area and is seen as a source of labour force**. Work is considered as the main integration driver. Both upon exit from reception programmes or independently, migrants easily find employment in agriculture in the area. Through their employers or social networks, they also find accommodation, although usually in inadequate and degrading conditions. In fact, housing informality in Acate and its surroundings creates major problems in residency registration, access to basic healthcare and other rights-related services. Relatedly, migrants residing in this rural area have to grapple with exploitative residence trading, transport exploitation, high school dropout rates, and lack of interactions with locals.

**Integration happens mostly informally and without recourse to structured initiatives** beyond the reception programmes.

**The parties in local government and the political tradition** of the main locality considered, Acate, are **generally conservative**. The issue of **integration is not politicised** and local authorities are generally disengaged from integration initiatives, both for lack of funding and for the low salience of the topic. In contrast, local administrations place more emphasis on the need to ensure public order and safety in the area.



## 4. Overarching themes

### 4.1 Development of integration policies

#### 4.1.1. Novara

In Novara **local politics has substantially affected approaches towards integration** of post-2014 migrants.

When the **centre-left coalition** was in power (2011-2016), the municipality's approach in terms of integration of post-2014 migrants was mostly **pro-active**. Indeed, the Municipality participated in the Ministry of Interior's call for SAI<sup>22</sup> in December 2015, marking a turning point in local reception policies - although the SAI facilities opened in 2017, when the centre-right government was in power. Moreover, in July 2015 the municipality promoted a social volunteering project for asylum seekers hosted in the CAS facilities. The project, based on an agreement between the municipality and the Prefecture of Novara, was developed in collaboration with the local waste disposal company, and involved small groups of migrants in the maintenance of green areas and waste collection.

After the **conservative coalition** led by the League won the elections in June 2016, **anti-reception and anti-integration policies** of post-2014 migrants were initially promoted. The municipality closed the SAI facility in December 2017 (a few months after its opening). In the same period, the social volunteering project involving post-2014 migrants was suppressed. In 2018, the municipality did not allow the carrying out of swimming classes for asylum seekers in the municipal swimming pool. This decision, justified by bureaucratic quibbles, caused an uproar<sup>23</sup>. According to the majority of interviewees, **as the years passed and the number of arrivals decreased, the issue of the integration** of migrants hosted in the CAS facilities **became less relevant**. Overall, the issue of integration seems simply not to be considered relevant in the local political agenda. As many interviewees stated, the issue of post-2014 migrants was significant in the public debate between 2015 and 2017 because of the high number of arrivals, then the attention waned.

It is worth emphasising that Novara is the only province in Piedmont where there were only CAS facilities and **no SAI facilities** till 2021, except for the few months of 2017<sup>24</sup>. Considering that the municipality's initiatives that went beyond reception were limited to a couple of years, when the centre-left coalition was in power, **integration measures have been generally poor and there has**

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<sup>22</sup> Delibera n.440 del 29/12/2015

<sup>23</sup> See: I migranti di novara trovano una piscina dopo lo stop del sindaco, "La Stampa", 23/3/2018

[https://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/03/23/news/i\\_migranti\\_di\\_novara\\_trovano\\_una\\_piscina\\_dopo\\_lo\\_stop\\_de\\_l\\_sindaco-192035914/](https://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/03/23/news/i_migranti_di_novara_trovano_una_piscina_dopo_lo_stop_de_l_sindaco-192035914/)

<sup>24</sup> The public tender to select the managing organisation of the SAI facility for UAMs was launched in November 2021.



**never been municipal office** dedicated to the foreign population<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, post-2014 migrants generally have little access to general welfare policies in the fields of employment and housing. Overall, we can affirm that local public entities have not played any role in the reception and integration of post-2014 migrants while **NGOs appear as the only actors active in immigrant reception and integration**.

Against this backdrop, the only measures specifically aimed at fostering the integration of post-2014 migrants are **fragmented bottom-up initiatives promoted by NGOs**. Some of these initiatives are carried out by large nationwide voluntary-based NGOs (Comunità di S. Egidio and Caritas), with their own resources. Other small-scale projects were financed either within the reception system (between 2016 and 2019, before the financial cuts to the CAS system), or EU-funded projects<sup>26</sup> or projects funded by the central government through AMIF, where the partners of region-led projects are NGOs rather than local authorities<sup>27</sup>.

The policy makers of both conservative and progressive parties tend to identify insufficient resources allocated by the national and regional governments and the region as a major factor explaining the lack of an adequate integration policy. Besides that, conservative policy makers point to the absence of formal competences of the municipalities on this subject, and the progressive ones highlight the lack of political will by national and local conservative majority.

**UAMs** deserve a separate discussion, since municipalities hold formal competences in this regard that cannot be easily dismissed (see section 3.1). In fact, those minors were provided with accommodation.

**Municipal social services**, although caught unprepared by the peak of foreign minors' arrival in 2016, made an effort to **respond to the phenomenon by identifying suitable reception facilities and by providing support with the bureaucratic procedures and educational projects**.

Over time, a more inclusive approach was developed towards this category of migrants, as demonstrated by the fact that the municipality submitted a **SAI project for UAMs** to the Ministry of Interior in 2019 - the facility should open within 2022. Moreover, social services have been involved

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<sup>25</sup> The only public office expressly dedicated to foreigners in the town was established by the local health authority and belongs to a regional programme. As in the rest of the region, an ISI centre has been operating since the early 2000s to provide health care to temporarily resident immigrants. Furthermore, there is the Equal Opportunities Office on a provincial basis, whose activities also concern many foreigners, mainly victims of trafficking.

<sup>26</sup> More in detail, the main projects are free Italian courses and housing programs offered by Comunità di S. Egidio; Caritas Third reception project that involved local families (which **ended** due to a lack of applications); the European Interreg Minplus project focused on the governance of integration dynamics.

<sup>27</sup> AMIF projects that involve some actors based in Novara, within large regional networks, are: Strong Ring (that involve a local TSO specialized in victims of human trafficking), Fair job (that involve the public Employment Agency of Novara) Petrarca (that involve the local Provincial Centres for Adult Education); Impact (that involve a public secondary school). None of these projects directly involves the Municipality of Novara.



in a new-born platform on unaccompanied minors established within an **INTERREG project** (Minplus)<sup>28</sup> in the Autumn of 2021.

**To sum up**, the shifting from the centre-left to the centre-right political coalition has highlighted the relevance of politics. Whereas the progressive government adopted a pro-migrant proactive approach, the conservative coalition adopted an anti-migrant proactive stance, at least in the first stage, dismantling all the initiatives set up by the previous government. As the years passed and the conservative majority consolidated its consensus, migrant integration has lost salience in the local political agenda and the municipality has then passed from an anti-migrant pro-active approach to a rather passive approach. Against this backdrop, all initiatives around adult migrants are exclusively promoted by NGOs managing CAS facilities and few nationwide voluntary-based NGOs. Despite the significant share of foreign residents living in Novara, the municipality does not play any role, with the exception of UAMs, towards whom the municipality has specific obligations and has recently developed a more pro-active approach.

#### 4.1.2. Cuneo

In Cuneo, the **rising salience of migrant integration** appears as **strictly related to the settlement of post-2014 migrants**, although they are rarely indicated by interviewees as the main cause of change, since they are difficult to identify as a single category, being articulated in very different groups, with different trajectories. Specifically, we can identify **three stages** where the arrival of post-2014 impacted the local situation and, consequently, local debate. First, the **setting up of CAS governmental reception facilities in 2014-2016** in the Cuneo's hamlets located outside the town (there have been no CAS in the town) triggered, on one hand, some public discussion and concern and, on the other hand, stimulated solidarity initiatives by civil society.

The second step was the **decision of the Municipality of Cuneo to take over the coordination of the provincial SAI in 2016**<sup>29</sup> and the subsequent rapid increase of reception places. This has been a catalyst for the expansion of integration services and the improvement of local governance over migrant integration.

Finally, migrant integration really got salience in the public debate with the **growing presence of foreign people in the area around the railway station from 2018-2019**. Those people gather during their spare time in the nearby streets, where some ethnic businesses have been established (a couple of which by post-2014 migrants), or sleep around the railway station (mainly foreigner agricultural seasonal workers, a large part of which are post-2014 migrants). At the same time, drug dealing in the area has drastically increased, involving to some extent people with a migrant

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<sup>28</sup> Minplus project is an INTERREG project on the governance of reception and integration of asylum seekers, refugees, and unaccompanied foreign minors. The partnership includes the Consortium of Social Services of the Ossola Valley (as leading body), the Region, Filos Formazione e Integra (local NGOs), the Social Action and Family Division of the Canton Ticino. See: <https://www.minplusproject.eu/>

<sup>29</sup> Delibera no. 24, 4th February 2016. Municipality of Cuneo





background. The overlapping of different phenomena has contributed to inflaming the debate and mixing up different kinds of issues. Hence, in the last years much of the public concerns and policy strategies have focused on the area of the railway station as well as on agricultural workers.

Specifically, the integration policies concerning - although not specifically addressing - post-2014 migrants can be articulated into **four strands**, all started by local actors outside only legislative obligations: **1) accommodation; 2) the SAI integration services and project-funded interventions in the areas of language learning, vocation training, inclusion in the labour market; 3) the municipal office for foreign-born people; and 4) activities aimed at fostering the relations between newcomers and the local community.**

The strand concerning **accommodation policies has three clusters**. The **first cluster consists of “third accommodation”**, namely accommodation in shared apartments, especially for post-2014 migrants who left reception facilities without having found any housing solutions. The apartments are generally owned or rented by **local voluntary-based NGOs and parishes** with no or little public funds. This kind of initiatives started to develop when the first refugees started to leave reception facilities, in 2015-2016.

The **second cluster of accommodation services consists of first shelters for homeless people**, a relevant share of which, according to the interviewees, is made up of post-2014 migrants and seasonal workers in agriculture. Those services are provided by **local and nation-wide voluntary-based NGOs** such Caritas, Red Cross and Papa Giovanni XXIII and have been generally expanded - rather than set up - in response to the growing numbers of foreign homeless people. The municipality offers support either in kind (e.g. the venue to the Red Cross) or cash, covering however only a small amount of the total costs<sup>30</sup>.

**The third cluster concerns the recent initiative of the municipality to accommodate homeless seasonal workers.** In 2020 the Municipality of Cuneo, together with other 9 municipalities (out of the 32 which belongs to the so-called “fruit district”) signed a Protocol with the Prefecture of Cuneo (see section 3.1.4.1). By pooling the funds coming from the Ministry of Interior and channelled through the local Prefecture thanks to the Protocol and those provided by local bank foundations and the AMIF project “Good Land”, the municipality offers a three-step path to accommodate foreigner agricultural seasonal workers<sup>31</sup>: 1) information and orientation at info point located within the Meet Point (see below); 2) temporary accommodation at Red Cross’ first shelter that, thanks to those additional funds, has passed from 30 to 50 places; 3) accommodation in shared apartments own by the municipality but especially by charities to which local authorities pay rents, maintenance costs and utilities (42 places in 2021).

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<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the Municipality has used part of the funds coming from the Nation Plan for Urban Peripheries (DPCM “Riqualificazione Urbana E Sicurezza Delle Periferie”, 25th May 2016) to co-finance renewal of buildings to devote to first-shelter structures run by third-sector organisations, i.e. Don Aldo Benevelli and Città dei ragazzi, that started their activities in 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Delibera no. 146, 27th May 2021, Municipality of Cuneo



The **second strand of integration measures concerns the SAI integration services, such as legal support, language courses, vocational training and employment services**. Being part of SAI, those are municipal services managed by the social cooperatives selected through a public bid and belonging to “*Rifugiati in Rete - Networked Refugees*” (see section 4.3.1). The municipality has decided to open those services to the whole migrant population. This is not a standard solution since in Italy the SAI integration measures generally address only those migrants hosted in the SAI reception facilities. However, this solution has been agreed with the national SAI Central Service and has been adopted by other Italian localities as well so it is not a peculiarity of Cuneo.

*“We have used this tool [SAI] also to build a network of competence within the local administration, since not all the local administrations have competences on those topics (...) The opportunities offered by the various services have been made available for the rest of the population beyond the beneficiaries of SAI” (I-Cu-11, Member of the local government)*

In the perspective of the whole-of-community approach, it is worth underlying that local SAI tries to mobilise the local community. As a result, in 2020, 45 **volunteers** supported migrants in learning Italian and obtaining lower high school diploma, looking after children, obtaining the driving licence, etc<sup>32</sup>.

The SAI integration measures are complemented by project-based interventions, especially in the areas of language learning, vocational training and inclusion into the labour market. In particular, the **AMIF projects**, funded by the national government and generally led by the Piedmont Region, play the part of the lion (see section 3.1.4.1).

The **third strand of services consists in the municipal office for people of foreign origin**. According to the municipality, the office was initially focused on support for administrative procedures and intercultural mediation but it became inadequate to manage the new scenario determined by the setting up of SAI, the growing salience of reception for agricultural workers and the multiplication of project-based initiatives. Against this backdrop, the municipality, which covers the expenses with its own budget, issued a bid for the management of the office and selected a new organisation, i.e. consortium of four local cooperatives and one association of intercultural mediators belonging to “*Networked Refugees*”<sup>33</sup> (see section 4.3.1). The office was renamed “*Meet Point - Integration, welcome, guidance and solidarity*”, and started operating in May 2021. From an organisation point of view, **the Meet Point is a sort of container where a large share of services provided by SAI and project-based initiatives are hosted or, at least, are made accessible through counselling and orientation** (eg. information - including the infopoint of the project “*Good Land*”, support in

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<sup>32</sup> SAI Cuneo, Report 2020, 2021

<sup>33</sup> Protocollo no 7212, 29th January 2021, Avviso pubblico per la co-progettazione e successiva gestione con il Comune di Cuneo delle attività previste nell’ambito del servizio rivolto alle persone di origine straniera [CIG 853629015B], Municipality of Cuneo



administrative procedures, legal counselling, intercultural mediation, recognition of education qualifications, orientation towards reception facilities and language classes).

It is worth underlining a feature that is shared by provincial capital cities like Cuneo: more than half of the beneficiaries of the Meet Point reside in neighbouring municipalities that, being too small, cannot provide specialised services. This suggests how, **in small towns surrounded by rural areas, integration measures can hardly be limited to their foreign residents.**

**The fourth cluster regards activities aimed at fostering the relations between newcomers and the local community.** At the time of the fieldwork, those measures had **mostly remained on paper**, also because of the **pandemic-related restrictions**. Indeed, the municipality had mainly intervened **in the area of the railway station**. Overall, those interventions appear inspired by a **mixed approach that has blended security-oriented and community-based elements**. On the one hand, under the pressure of the residents, in September 2020 the municipality adopted an ordinance to forbid sleeping outside during the pandemic emergency<sup>34</sup> triggering the mobilisation of local pro-migrant NGOs (although its implementation was rather poor and toleration prevailed), and in October 2021 it ripped up the benches where migrants (and, apparently, drug dealers) used to gather. On the other hand, the municipality tries to foster social relations and community building. In this regard, the main intervention is “The Buoy” project, funded through National Plan for Peripheral Urban Areas launched in 2014, implemented in four neighbourhoods, and acting as a facilitator of relations and a connector between initiatives. Although not devoted to migrant integration, in the area of the railway station its activities have mainly focused on the relations between migrants and natives.

Beyond the above-mentioned migrant-specific services, it is worth underlining that post-2014 who have a regular legal status can access the **mainstream welfare services** (employment public agencies, social services, etc). Yet, those services do not have either a precise idea of the size and needs of the beneficiaries belonging to this category of population or any specific measures to support it.

That said, the consortium of social services<sup>35</sup> has been involved in SAI since 2020. The engagement of social workers in SAI interdisciplinary working groups can be regarded as a rather innovative practice, although it concerns only people living in reception facilities. At the same time, the SAI coordinated by Cuneo does not include facilities for **UAMs** (because of the unwillingness of the consortia of social services of the area to participate in SAI calls) who are instead accommodated by the consortia of social services thanks to funding coming from the central government and channelled through the municipalities.

Overall, the **main criticism highlighted by the local NGOs and political opposition about local integration policies concerns the prevailing focus on emergency measures and the still limited attention for integration** processes that goes beyond the satisfaction of basic needs.

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<sup>34</sup> Ordinanza 488, 17th August 2020. Municipality of Cuneo

<sup>35</sup> In Italy, smaller municipalities pool the resources for social services into consortia controlled by the municipalities themselves and managing social services.



*“From 2020 things have changed since the numbers [of migrants] have changed, they have significantly increased and there has been a general inability to recalibrate [the interventions] timely, especially by the institutions” (I-Cu-7, pro-migrant group)*

*“There is always an emergency, therefore it is complex to stay focused on a medium-long term planning” (I-Cu-3, pro-migrant NGO)*

*“In my opinion, there is neither the possibility, the will nor the competences to create long term integration services” (I-Cu-5, expert/pro-migrant group)*

*“For too long this [migrant integration] has been treated as an emergency problem (...) The fact that we have always spoken of an emergency was a thing that we did not understand and we said: it is a phenomenon to manage. I believe that we have disregarded the social aspect” (I-Cu-14, member of opposition in local council)*

To **sum up**, post-2014 migrants have been crucial in bringing migrant integration into the public debate and political agenda and in triggering local integration policies. Since 2016 to nowadays, the types of intervention have diversified, especially in the field of temporary accommodation, whereas the measures aimed at fostering the relations between newcomers and the local community, despite being in the municipal agenda, have been poorly implemented, also as a consequence of the pandemic-related restrictions. Although the collaboration is rather tight, different categories of actors play different roles. Voluntary-based NGOs are key in providing, since 2016, third accommodation and first shelter investing their own resources with limited economic help from the municipality. Professional NGOs are providers of all the municipal integration services (i.e. SAI reception facilities and integration services, and the municipal office for migrant integration Meet Point). The municipality has taken the initiative especially to tackle the most pressing issues that emerged since 2019, i.e., homeless agricultural seasonal workers and inter-group tensions that have raised in the area of the railway station. At the same time, its role in migrant integration governance has substantially expanded and the newly established municipal office for migrant integration, named Meet Point, is part of this trend.



### 4.1.3. Avigliana and surrounding villages

The my of Avigliana, **together with other 4 municipalities**<sup>36</sup>, started a SAI facility consisting of **shared apartments** in 2014<sup>37</sup>. Yet, the very turning point was the multiplication of CAS facilities set up by the Prefecture of Turin in 2015 and especially the establishment of a CAS centre with 50 places in Almese, a village of 6,000 inhabitants located 7 kilometres away from Avigliana, that was poorly run by a social cooperative coming from another region and with no connections with the local community. This episode represented a triggering event and prompted the proactive approach of the vibrant local network of NGOs in the lower Susa Valley, where Avigliana is located: groups of volunteers started to set up Italian classes, recreational, theatrical, artistic, and sporting activities to include these migrants and make them feel part of the community. This mobilisation was strongly supported by the local government of Almese and of neighbouring municipalities.

Furthermore, local policy makers and associations complained for not being consulted by the Prefecture when setting up CAS. This led 20 municipalities of this area, led by Avigliana, to **sign an agreement with the Prefecture of Turin in order to run all local CAS facilities directly**<sup>38</sup> and according to the guidelines of SAI. The **local project around CAS facilities, called MAD**<sup>39</sup> started in **2016**, and consisted of shared apartments spread out over 20 municipalities of the lower Valley. Avigliana, being the leader of this inter-municipality consortium, entrusted the management of the reception, through a public tender, to a temporary association of NGOs<sup>40</sup>.

The MAD project, despite being a CAS, offered the same integration services as the SAI facilities (Italian language classes, psychological and legal assistance, activities to foster inter-ethnic relations, internships). This project finished in December 2020 because it was no longer extended by the Prefecture, while the SAI facility in Avigliana is running until today.

Beyond the reception system, networked **public and private organisations are engaged in integration projects funded by local bank foundations**, which can be articulated in two clusters.

The **first cluster** (POLI project, 2021-2022) **aims to foster migrants' empowerment by reinforcing and widening the network developed around the reception projects**. Activities consist of the following services: legal assistance, housing mediation, job guidance and orientation to local

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<sup>36</sup> The municipalities are: Almese, Caprie, Rivalta di Torino, Vaie.

<sup>37</sup> See: deliberazione n.210 del 17/10/2013, <https://www.comune.avigliana.to.it/it-it/amministrazione/amministrazione-trasparente/provvedimenti/provvedimenti-organismi-indirizzo-politico/2013#122323>

<sup>38</sup> See: Protocollo tra la Prefettura di Torino e Enti Locali, Per l'accoglienza diffusa in Bassa Valle di Susa di richiedenti e titolari di protezione internazionale presenti in Italia, <http://www.prefettura.it/torino/contenuti/Protocolli-154918.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> The project was subsequently extended to the municipalities in the upper valley.

<sup>40</sup> The temporary association includes: Cooperativa Frassati. Cooperativa Sociale ORSO, Commissione Sinodale per la Diaconia Valdese, Fondazione Talità onlus, Cooperativa Amico. All these organisations are based or have previous experience in Susa Valley.



services. Those services are offered to migrants and all those people from the local community who need information/orientation on migrant-related issues (e.g. employers, landlords, volunteers, etc)<sup>41</sup>.

The **second cluster** (Tomorrow Together, 2019-2022; Time to Time, 2021-2024)<sup>42</sup> aims to **accompany UAMs and former UAMs who came of age to autonomy**, working on social relations with locals, education, employability, and housing independence. Both clusters follow the **whole of community approach**: alongside NGOs and public entities, policy makers, social workers, volunteers, pro-migrant activists, and citizens form a **close-knit network** that directly supports migrants.

The **local proactive approach** regarding the integration of post-2014 migrants seems to be the result of the combination of **four main factors**: **politics** (progressive coalition in the leading municipality); **cultural and political liveliness** (mainly embodied in the NO TAV movement and Christian and leftist activism, see section 4.3.1.3.); **historical experience** with migration; and a **good collaboration between NGOs and local public entities**.

To **sum up**, the Municipality of Avigliana and local policy makers play a leading role in the integration policy and in promoting a local proactive approach to post-2014 migrant reception and integration. At the same time, the Susa Valley is characterised by a dense network of public and private organisations involved in the local welfare system and operating in a pro-migrant social and political climate, where there have not been demonstrations against migrants, and the issue appears marginal even for opposition parties (centre-right, populist or left-wing). From 2014, this network has increasingly improved its competences and skills over migrant integration so that it is now able to promote successful projects and attract resources from philanthropic institutions. Those projects are aimed, on one hand, to foster housing and labour integration of those leaving reception facilities and migrants in general and, on the other hand, to support the inclusion of UAMs, that constitute a sizeable population in the Valley.

#### 4.1.4. Siracusa

The topics of migration and integration have been prominent in the local agenda of this locality in the last years, with **great efforts of the local administration and grassroots initiatives to improve integration**. Local initiatives and policies regard the municipality hamlet of Cassibile and Siracusa itself.

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<sup>41</sup>The project, initially designed to support migrants leaving reception facilities, is articulated in public offices scattered through the Valley (Avigliana, Susa and Bussoleno).

<sup>42</sup> These projects were funded within the tender “Never Alone” promoted by a network of European philanthropic foundations and led by cooperativa Piergiorgio Frassati, involving a wide range of organisations: the provincial centre of adult education, Con.I.SA (involved in both MAD project in the upper valley and POLI project), Associazione Geos, Atypica, COESA. See: <https://minoristranieri-neveralone.it/progetto/doman-ansema/>



Regarding **Cassibile**, in the last years local **policies have focused on the response to the situation of severe labour exploitation and housing deprivation affecting seasonal workers employed in the surrounding rural area, many of which are post-2014 migrants**. Due to exploitative working conditions and a general lack of accommodation facilities, seasonal workers have resorted to establishing informal settlements in the fields in the last 25 years. In addition to exposing migrant workers to degrading living conditions, the situation has regularly caused regular protests by residents about the precarious sanitary conditions in the area.

The issue of basic facilities for seasonal workers has been addressed by the Municipality of **Siracusa**, in cooperation with the Prefecture and the region, through the **ACCA project** funded in 2020 by the Ministry of Interior through PON Legality funds (see section 3.1.1.1). The project consisted in the **construction of a camp (called “hostel”)**, officially opened in April 2021, with 80 places in 17 accommodation units for migrant workers with a residence permit. The costs for maintenance will be covered also by the Bilateral Agricultural Entity (EBAT), grouping the main employers' organisations and unions, as well as by the migrant workers themselves. The region provides further services in the follow-up to the project through PON Inclusion and AMIF funds, particularly on-site healthcare.

The opening of the accommodation facilities have also **resulted in protests from local residents**, organised in a committee, who oppose the municipality's choice of the area and, more generally, the presence of high numbers of migrant workers. These protests have been endorsed by the opposition to the local council, particularly by far-right group Fratelli D'Italia, who have criticised the administration over their management of the security situation.

The second group of initiatives and local policies for post-2014 migrants regard the city of **Siracusa, and specifically the neighbourhood of Borgata Santa Lucia, where most migrant communities reside**. Inclusion initiatives for migrants living in the city of Siracusa can be systematised as follows: **1) involvement of the municipality in reception programmes and AMIF-funded projects aimed at enhancing integration services; 2) post-reception support; 3) civil society's mobilisation around voluntary guardianship for UAMs**.

As for **reception facilities and the related integration services**, the municipality has been involved in a SAI project with the neighbouring Municipality of Melilli, managed by the cooperative “Common Places (*Luoghi Comuni*).” The centre was closed in 2017 due to mismanagement problems. The locality also hosted the CAS centre “Umberto I,” closed in 2016 by the Prefecture of Siracusa amidst mismanagement allegations against the cooperative in charge of running the centre. Overall, **mismanagement seems to be the major problem of reception initiatives in Siracusa**, confirming the effects of gaps in state capacity between Italian regions (see section 3.1.3).

As for **AMIF-funded projects**, they mainly focus on **capacity building for local service providers and service access** for third country nationals. The municipality is the leading partner of these projects, i.e. “Comune dei Popoli (*Municipality of the Peoples*)”, “Co.efficienti”, “Busy” and “ISIM”. When it come to improving service access, the municipality is also partner of a project funded by the region through the AMIF “Su.Pr.Eme” for the activation of multifunctional service centres for migrants in all Sicilian provinces. The AMIF projects in the period considered are seen as important **game changer** which have had an impact on local policies and integration at the local level by injecting more resources into the system.



**Post-reception/intercultural services** for people with migration background, including post-2014 migrants, are offered by **public services and by NGOs**, particularly in Borgata Santa Lucia<sup>43</sup> and Ortigia, two neighbourhoods in the city centre of Siracusa.

As for **public services**, the Provincial Health Agency (ASP) provides **information on access to healthcare** to all third-country nationals through its Immigration Office. The social services of the municipality offer healthcare and related social support through its decentralised offices, including in Cassibile and Borgata Santa Lucia, and work in partnership with other voluntary- and professional-based NGOs.

The **two NGOs working in the area which serve as reference points for the local community are CIAO and Arci**. Cultural and advocacy nation-wide NGO Arci, located in the main square of the neighbourhood, carries out advocacy activities and provides orientation and support services, including the Migrant Protection Desk. Arci is also a partner in the capacity-building project “Comune dei Popoli (*Municipality of the Peoples*)” led by the municipality. CIAO (Intercultural Help and Orientation Centre) is a faith-based NGO which offers activities to all residents, targeting in particular UAMs and young adult migrants in the post-reception phase.

As for **civil society initiatives**, in 2013 Siracusa’s branches of **NGOs Asgi** (Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration) **and Arci** advocated for a system of **UAMs’ voluntary guardianship** foreseen by the Law 47/2017 (see section 3.1.1.1), establishing the voluntary guardianship association **Accoglierete** (Welcoming Network/You will welcome). The movement was also a response to the degrading conditions of minors in the CAS centre “Umberto I.” Accoglierete, with the support of the Prefecture and the Minors Tribunal, ensures one-to-one legal guardianship to UAMs in Siracusa’s province and in other parts of Sicily. Interviewees regard the establishment of Accoglierete as a turning point in local inclusion policies as it has both improved awareness and inter-organisational cooperation on inclusion policies for UAMs.

*“The weaknesses [of the Municipality of Siracusa] are that it has been a little slow to achieve good levels of reception. We achieved that with the mobilisation for voluntary guardianship with Accoglierete.” (I-Si-5, Expert/pro-migrant NGO)*

The **local approach to integration** policies has been **mostly shaped by, on the one hand, national and regional project-based initiatives, particularly those funded through AMIF**. On the other, the **presence of grassroots organisations** has been aimed at responding to the recurring mismanagement of reception centres and the migrants’ local needs. During the period considered,

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<sup>43</sup> The area of Borgata Santa Lucia is a reference point also for guests or former guests of neighbouring reception centres, particularly CAS centres located in the municipalities of Rosolini, Melilli, and Noto, as well as the SAI centres in Canicattini Bagni, managed by the cooperative Passwork. These neighbourhoods host large diaspora communities, second generations, and newcomers. Intercultural relations are generally positive, and the presence of migrants is generally seen as part of the local social fabric.





in fact, the number of NGOs active in Siracusa has grown, including Accogliere, Arci, and CIAO, Impact Hub, Emergency, Save the Children, Proxima, IOM, Caritas.

*“The characteristics of Siracusa is a good social capital of associationism, a well-organised civil society. This is the history of Accogliere: when people asked for help, for protection but also for Italian teachers, clothes etc., we were always flooded with solidarity, there was always a good response.” (I-Si-5 Expert/pro-migrant organisation)*

While **local politics is seen as non-influential, national politics is described as having had an impact**. In particular, the so-called Decree on Security and Migration, adopted in 2018, is considered as a turning point. Specifically, it narrowed the conditions to obtain a residence permit on humanitarian grounds and, according to the interviewees from local reception centres, it created administrative problems and had a negative impact on individual inclusion pathways. In the context of the same legal changes, in addition, integration services were drastically reduced (see section 3.1.1.1). As a result, service providers had to continue their work offering poorer integration services in what was perceived to have become a hostile environment.

*“With respect to [local] politics, I have to say that there is not much difference. The political choices of the national government have been determining, and we have directly experienced the effects of the Salvini decrees. We used to manage a centre for minors and we had to close it because there no longer was the same collaboration that we had with the Prefecture, we tried to do things well and so we decided to step down immediately.” (I-Si-8, Employers’ intermediary/service provider)*

To **sum up**, in Siracusa the progressive local administration has had a leading role in initiating and supporting integration initiatives. It is also engaged in multiple projects in close collaboration with NGOs. While the mismanagement of reception facilities has been a recurring issue in this locality, the leading role of the local administration and NGOs in setting the agenda and advocating for progressive policy change has fostered the development of local integration policies, particularly regarding UAMs and agricultural workers.

#### 4.1.5. Caltagirone

In the period considered, the development of local policies in this locality can be systematised in **two phases**. In the first phase, policies regarded the **response to the humanitarian and security public order situation in and around the largest governmental reception centre in the country, located in the neighbouring locality of Mineo**. The Mineo reception centre was opened in 2011 following the increase in arrivals from Northern Africa and, at the peak of the emergency, accommodated up to 4000 asylum seekers, twice its maximum capacity. Shortly after its opening, the Mineo centre became an emblem of migrant ghettoization and bad reception practices,



including documented cases of violence and abuses. After a series of scandals, judicial investigation, and parliamentary commissions of inquiry, the centre was eventually shut down in 2019 by Minister of Interior Salvini. Following the closure of the centres, some asylum seekers were relocated to other destinations, while others were left with no alternative accommodation and were offered support by local NGOs in the area, including by Caritas in Caltagirone. Interviewees describe this phase as focused on managing the **humanitarian and public order situation in the locality**, for example in relation to the protests of the migrants residing in the centre, with little room for longer-term integration considerations.

*“Together with a very controversial management that has given rise to many judicial proceedings, life inside the reception centre was difficult for these people who were fleeing poverty, abuse, and war. This climate had repercussions on the neighbouring cities starting from Caltagirone, where we had some disruptions due to the migrants’ protests that interrupted transit on road 417 Catania-Gela. And yet, thanks to the interventions of the administrations it was quite limited and managed without extreme gravity.” (I-Ca-10, Mayor, conservative)*

The **second phase covers the period 2016-2022 and is marked by the development of a local response beyond mere public order enforcement and policing**. In this phase, integration policies revolve around the municipality’s participation in SAI reception programmes as well as national and EU funding schemes. Consequently, the involvement of the municipality in integration policies is strongly linked if not limited to the reception system, both with respect to funding and objectives.

The **second phase was centred on 1) integration measures related to reception programmes entrusted to the municipality which outsource service provision to NGOs**, with a limited role reserved to municipal social services (SAI Project for UAM “La Vita Adesso (*Life Now*),” SAI Project “Iride (*Iris*)” for adults, SAI for UAMs “Comunità San Giuseppe (*Saint Joseph Community*);” **2) follow-up initiatives for those former reception programmes’ beneficiaries who stayed in the locality**, who are generally perceived as being a minority due to the poor attractiveness of the area. Most support services and initiatives that regard this group are **informal**, including personal relationships with social workers who provided support during the reception period, and target **UAMs and former UAMs**.

**Integration policies are devised through a network of NGOs around SAI reception centres**. This network is composed of faith-based organisations (Caritas and Diocesis), associations that support families specifically (ASTRA), pro-migrant groups (Arci Amari), state-run Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA), the Provincial Health Agency (ASP), and local employers which collaborate through internships and trainings. The municipality is in charge of social services, legal guardianship for UAMs and cultural mediation. It also oversees the reception programmes and organises regular staff meetings, claiming for itself the role of coordinator.



*“We have regular meetings with the operators of the SAI facilities every two months or when there is a problem. As far as UAMs are concerned, we have legal custody. So we carry out regular visits on behalf of the municipality to see the progress of the facilities and whether children are enrolled in school.” (I-Ca-9, local official from the municipality)*

*“When we arrived there was no organised network coordinated by a public body. We tried to do this also through control, not to repress but to prevent mismanagement in centres that, after all, are all private, albeit financed by the municipality, and no serious problems were found. We introduced this modus operandi which involved also psychological and material interventions for migrants on equal terms with the residents. And this has resulted in a peaceful climate.(...) It was especially in social assistance where we identified the resources to carry out projects that saw the municipality as a protagonist or co-protagonist with the structures responsible for implementing the projects.” (I-Ca-10, mayor, conservative).*

**NGOs generally disagree with this view of the approach and role of the municipality.** They describe their collaboration with the municipality as generally hard because the approach of the latter is overly focused on the “bare minimum” with no real endorsement of integration initiatives and objectives.

*“We come from ten years of extreme right in Caltagirone, so we had social services that did not cooperate with us very much, the minimum necessary to comply with the law. On the part of the municipality, which is the managing body, there has never been a desire to organise an event for the city. It is we cooperatives that have always been the ones to propose the various activities. I cannot say that the social services of the Social Policies Department of the municipality have not been available, but always only within the limits of the bare minimum. The municipality would never put itself in the front row for immigrants, absolutely not.” (I-Ca-8, No-profit service provider)*

**Services are mostly offered within SAI reception programmes and reserved to reception beneficiaries,** including job placement, linguistic training, psychological support, and cultural mediation.

**Regarding housing support services within SAI, one of the SAI service providers has established a partnership with a real estate agency** in the framework of the municipal reception programme, but this partnership has not come into being due to the unwillingness of homeowners to give their property out for rent to residents with migration background. The most successful way to ensure that beneficiaries find autonomous accommodation upon leaving the centres remains the service provider’s trust-based networks in Caltagirone.

In addition to housing and employment, activities within SAI centres have the goal of **accompanying towards autonomous service access after the reception period.**



**A significant example of post-reception services provided in the locality is the AMIF-funded SHUBH project**, launched in 2020. The project consisted in the activation of an “Integra Corner” based on the **one-stop-shop model for labour integration** within trade unions’ offices (CGIL-Patronato Inca). The project has therefore enhanced existing services which were already provided by the same union, but on a smaller scale and with less capacity-building initiatives available.

To **sum up**, in Caltagirone, the conservative local administration participates in SAI programme, entrusting the management to local NGOs but it does not appear to have had a leading role in local integration initiatives. In contrast, a rich network of NGOs has developed in this locality within SAI reception programmes. Integration services are mostly offered within SAI reception programme and reserved to reception beneficiaries, although a one-stop-shop model for labour integration has been established by trade union in 2020 thanks to national funds. However, the impact of integration measures is influenced by the overall difficult economic situation and by the lack of attractive employment opportunities.

#### 4.1.6. Acate and Santa Croce Camerina

Local policies implemented in this area regard **1) integration services provided within reception programmes; 2) spatial segregation and lack of service access in rural areas; 3) labour exploitation**.

In the first respect, Acate **hosted the SAI project “Biscari,”** which was shut down in 2015, before the time-span consider Whole-COMM. The closure was probably caused by **residents’ protests** related to the fact that the SAI facility was close to a school.<sup>44</sup>

In 2015, **two CAS reception centres for male adults were opened**. Unlike the SAI facility, the **opening of these centres had only a marginal impact on the perception of migration and no significant opposition** from locals nor from the local administration. This can be explained by the fact that these CAS facilities are not in the centre of Acate.

**CAS integration services have been expanded thanks to the collaboration with project-based initiatives and local NGOs.** For instance, the CAS centres’ users participate in AMIF projects on various integration aspects promoted by the Prefecture and receive linguistic training in house or through the CPIA in Vittoria. The NGO managing the two CAS facilities collaborates also with the professional NGOs Doctor for Human Rights (MEDU) and the local mental health services of the Ministry of Health (DSM) to provide mental health support to their guests. Lastly, the service provider has tried to establish a job placement service for companies in the area but this project was interrupted due to the pandemic.

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<sup>44</sup> The SAI facility was located in the centre of Acate, close to a school. Residents protested, raising safety concerns. Service provider Saint John the Baptist Foundation responded by organising activities in downtown Acate involving the centre’s guests in order to convey a positive image of the centre itself.



Secondly, the **issue of spatial segregation and lack of service access in non-urban areas**, particularly in Marina di Acate, where most post-2014 migrants work and live, has prompted **Caritas of Ragusa to offer de-centralised access to basic services by opening a service centre in Marina di Acate** in the framework of Caritas' "**Garrison Project (Progetto Presidio)**." The service centre was opened in 2014 in collaboration with the NGO Proxima and the municipality. The goal of the project is to establish a permanent service point with specialised officers and volunteers who can ensure that **agricultural workers living in exploitative conditions find guidance as to their legal, health, and work situation**. In addition to managing the office in Marina di Acate, operators reach the encampments where workers live.

*"The objectives [of the Garrison Project] were, first of all, a stable presence among the foreigners who live here. There is a lot of loneliness. This is the most serious problem apart from the economic one. They are isolated in all respects. Then, we wanted to give legal support. This is most needed here as there is often an illegal intermediation that profits on residence permits and the sale of residences is a widespread phenomenon." (I-Ac-4, pro-migrant group)*

The establishment of the service centre in Marina di Acate was followed, in 2016, by the implementation of the **FARI project**, co-financed by the Equal Opportunities Department and the Municipalities of Ragusa, Acate, and Comiso. The project is implemented in close collaboration with local NGOs, namely Caritas Ragusa through its Garrison Project and Proxima and it aims at **providing comprehensive support to victims of various forms of exploitation, including housing, healthcare assistance, and employment orientation services**.

**Thirdly, regarding labour exploitation, the Municipalities of Acate and Santa Croce Camerina have been involved as partners in the Permanent Thematic Tables to promote the regularisation of work contracts in the province of Ragusa.** The Tables were established by the Prefecture of Ragusa in the framework of the 2019 Protocol on the prevention and contrast of labour exploitation and operate in conjunction with PON Legality and AMIF projects, led by the MIES and the Prefecture respectively.<sup>45</sup> Through the Tables, the Prefecture aims at monitoring the state of agricultural labour in the area, promoting awareness about employment rights among workers, and supporting local administrations, employers, and trade unions to launch awareness campaigns to promote regularisation.

To achieve this, the Tables gather a wide network of local, provincial, and regional actors, unions, employers' organisations, and NGOs, in addition to the Municipalities of Ragusa, Vittoria, Acate, Comiso, Santa Croce Camerina, Scicli e Ispica. IOM also participates in the Tables' activities, providing technical support and capacity building.

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<sup>45</sup> The Protocol implemented the May 2016 Experimental protocol against the gang master system and agricultural labour exploitation.



In addition to participating in this monitoring and networking platform, the municipalities have undertaken **initiatives through PON Legality funds** to make available **accommodation places and basic services** (transports, linguistic support, contract regularisation, support to victims of trafficking and labour exploitation) for seasonal workers and **promoting labour regularisation** - the Municipality of Santa Croce Camerina is the leading partner of the project “Campaign of civility. Stop to gangmaster system (*Campagna di Civiltà. Stop caporalato*)” and the Municipality of Acate manages the project “Let’s cultivate legality and fight the gangmaster system (*Coltiviamo la legalità e contrastiamo il caporalato*).”

Last but not least, the Municipalities of Acate and Santa Croce are involved, together with those of Vittoria and Ragusa, in the project “Rural Educational Hub,” initiated by the Palermo-based NGO International South-South Cooperation (CISS).<sup>46</sup> The goal of the project is to **fight educational poverty** by carrying out activities in local schools and through the creation of a **network of rural educational hubs**, in cooperation with the local NGO “With the Children (*Con I Bambini*)” and the municipalities of the area. Through the project, CISS promotes the activation of a network involving the municipalities, the social services, NGOs, as well as trade unions and private companies.

As for the prominence of the topic of integration in the local agenda, the area has **traditionally seen a high concentration of third country nationals** who move to the locality or its surroundings for work and, often, settle there with their families. **Despite this, until recently there were no occasions for encounters or exchanges** between the newcomers and other locals except for occasional clashes during the summer months, when Acate’s residents return to their summer houses, particularly in Marina di Acate. As a consequence, ensuring that these two groups do have non-conflictual exchanges has been one of the key objectives of the voluntary-based NGOs operating in the area. Beyond this, segregation and interactions only through work are largely normalised.

*“The problem is the geographical dislocation: the migrants live in Marina di Acate and encounters with locals there happen only in the summer, when residents come back to their summer houses. And this always ends up in a clash. (...) There are no occasions to meet and no intercultural mediation in place. The migrants and the people of Acate live far from each other. (...) I cannot really talk about episodes of conflicts because here, in fact, there is no clash, the problem does not exist, it emerges when there are big inquiries, the Guardian has made that article but it is a meteor on the subject.” (I-Ac-4, Expert/pro-migrant group).*

Regarding the specific **local approach to integration**, the **local administrations in this area tend to frame the issue of integration in terms of public order enforcement**, suggesting that this is the prevalent frame in the local agenda.

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<sup>46</sup> CISS is the implementing partner of the Fund for the Contrast of Youth Educational Poverty.



*“Our objectives, in general, are two: one is addressing language barriers to overcome episodes of marginalisation that may affect my fellow citizens. The other fundamental objective is enforcing public order, so as to avoid that the presence of migrants leads to petty crime.” (I-Ac-10, Member of the local government)*

For their part, **interviewees from NGOs lament the lack of integration services beyond the reception system and describe the municipalities in this area as lacking a strategic approach** to address spatial isolation and barriers to service access. In their view, the **municipalities are disengaged**, they do not oppose awareness-raising initiatives to promote inclusion and intercultural exchanges, but do not actively contribute to them either.

*“Local policies are totally non-existent, the municipality has been struggling with financial problems and we go by thanks to some superheroes who care for this issue. There is no system, there are some initiatives but these are project-based. Caritas has more continuity, but we always work based on projects.” (I-Ac-4, Expert/pro-migrant group)*

*“We proposed several projects to the municipality to contribute to the local community. Only these initiatives have always ended up being ours, and not also the municipality’s. We proposed to clean up the green areas of the municipality and we expected the municipality to involve the citizens, but instead we were left on our own.” (I-Ac-2, No-profit service provider)*

In fact, the **municipalities considered in this area provide minimal social services and universalistic service provision within their respective urban areas, and not in the rural outskirts**, where most post-2014 migrants live. The disengagement of municipalities from integration issues is certainly influenced by their **precarious financial situations and by their conservative political leaning**, as suggested by the emphasis on public order enforcement. Still, these municipalities do not oppose involvement in reception programmes or large funding schemes.

Interestingly, **those not directly involved in reception or migrant support services hold the view that targeted policies are not needed because integration happens by itself**, mostly through the fact that the **area has a welcoming tradition and there is no shortage of employment in agriculture**. This confirms the insight that migration and the related widespread phenomenon of agricultural labour exploitation are normalised in this rural area.

*“There haven’t been major integration initiatives, also because there was no need for them. Integration here occurred naturally.” (I-Ac-3, Employers’ organisation)*

Against this backdrop, **voluntary- and professional-based NGOs play a crucial role both in providing integration services and in advocating for a greater engagement of local authorities**. In some cases,



additionally, municipal social services request the activation of voluntary-based NGOs to make up for their lack of capacity or longer bureaucratic procedures, particularly in emergency situations.

*“It depends on the cases, if necessary, we request the activation of Caritas. If an emergency response is needed we request their intervention, our bureaucracy takes longer.” (I-Ac-11, Local official from the municipality)*

More often, though, it is NGOs which solicit the intervention or engagement of the municipalities. A notable example, in this respect, is Caritas requesting the Municipality of Acate to extend garbage collection and school bus services to Marina di Acate area. In addition to implementing project-based initiatives in partnership with the municipalities, NGOs and unions act as advocacy coalitions with respect to the Prefecture and the municipality, and facilitate dialogue among local actors.

*“We have different styles, but our collaboration is good and we act as a “critical group” with respect to the local administrations and the Prefecture.” (I-Ac-5, NGO/pro-migrant group)*

Lastly, the **impact of national policies has been felt in two ways**. Firstly, the new accounting rules introduced in the context of the Migration and Security Decree of 2018 (see section 3.1.1.1) have had a negative impact on the daily operations of the centres, hampering the management of the centre, and have been opposed by local service providers. Secondly, the Law on the Gangmaster System (see section 3.1.1.1) and the initiatives for Ministry of Interiors involving the municipalities in Thematic Tables to tackle agricultural labour exploitation are perceived as having had a crucial role both in terms of regularisation of work contracts, awareness at the local level, and practical solutions to exploitation conditions.

To **sum up**, the Municipality of Acate is generally disengaged from integration initiatives. Local policy makers mostly frame the issue of integration in terms of public order enforcement. They are more eager to secure the involvement of the municipality as a leader or partner in large national bids to tackle labour exploitation in agriculture rather than promoting access to services or supporting intercultural activities. Still, this overall approach has not implied the politicisation of migration in the local public debate. The large presence of migrant workers mainly employed as seasonal workers in agriculture has remained largely uncontroversial and is seen as the norm. This is both for the longstanding presence of foreign residents in the area and because the latter represent the greatest part of the local labour force. Public social services are understaffed and have to grapple with the municipality’s precarious financial situation. As a consequence of these financial limits combined with local politics, the municipality provides minimal services within the urban area only, and not in the rural outskirts, where most post-2014 migrants live and work. The lack of decentralised public services in these remote areas has prompted professional and voluntary NGOs to offer basic services. They have a leading role both in service provision and in acting as advocacy coalitions to push for a greater involvement of local authorities, although with poor results.





Relations between NGOs and local authorities exist and are collaborative only insofar as the latter occasionally rely on the former to make up for gaps in service provision.

#### 4.1.7. Comparative remarks

Comparing the six case studies, we can affirm that **politics** affects integration policies addressing post-2014 migrants. Indeed, in the **progressive localities, i.e. Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa, the municipality shows a proactive “pro-migrant” approach** and leads several projects concerning post-2014 migrants’ integration, always working in tight cooperation with local NGOs that play a key role as well.

As for the **conservative localities, we see a more proactive “anti-migrant” approach in Novara**, where the municipality shut down the SAI facility started by the previous progressive majority and interrupted the social activities involving asylum seekers, **whereas in Caltagirone and Acate local authorities are simply disengaged** from integration initiatives. More generally, we observe a **greater difficulty of Sicily’s municipalities to act, due to the weak state capacities and lower economic and organisational resources** (see section 3.1.3).

The relevance of local political orientations seems to depend on the fact that almost none of the identified integration measures, except for those concerning UAMs, are mandatory for local authorities (section 3.1.1). Hence, the latter can decide whether to intervene or to what extent.

Despite the differences in municipalities’ political orientation, in all localities **mainstream services appear as still rather unequipped to deal with post-2014 migrants**, with the exception of Avigliana. Generally, public services do not perceive post-2014 migrants as a relevant category among their beneficiaries and do not have specific devices to support their access. This could be partially explained by the separation between the Italian reception system and welfare system illustrated in section 3.1.1.1.

The result is that the large majority of services addressing post-2014 migrants are 1) managed by professional and voluntary-based NGOs, with their own resources or after a public procurement; and 2) project-based and funded through the participation in calls for projects.

Against this backdrop, the **relation between the local and central government** appears particularly significant. First, **the national reception programmes (CAS and SAI) have been crucial in the development of local integration measures.**

Second, **the central government’s integration programmes co-funded by the EU** (especially Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the European Structural and Investment Funds that are channeled through the PON national programmes) **have played a relevant role in the expansion of integration measures.** This is more evident in the Southern localities, where local resources are more limited, than in Northern localities where both municipalities and local NGOs employ also their own resources to set up migrant integration measures or can rely upon alternative sources of funding (eg. the numerous local bank foundations).

The combination of those two dynamics has produced **three types of situations:**



- a) integration measures for post-2014 migrants are almost exclusively provided within the reception system to people hosted there (Avigliana till 2021, Caltagirone, Novara), alongside a limited number of small-sized initiatives promoted by NGOs;
- b) reception-related integration measures have become accessible to every migrant (Cuneo);
- c) integration services are provided not only within the reception system but also through project-based initiatives (Cuneo, Avigliana since 2021, Acate and Siracusa).

Finally, we can affirm that whereas politics matters, the other variables which have been considered in the selection of localities appear less relevant. **The size of the municipality, the economic trends or the tradition of cultural diversity do not significantly affect local integration policies.** The most developed integration policies addressing post-2014 migrants have been identified in localities of different sizes and with diverse economic and demographic trends, i.e. Cuneo (small town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants higher than the average of Northern Italy), Avigliana (rural area, with a variation of the income and inhabitants higher than the average of Northern Italy) and Siracusa (medium town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants lower than the average of Southern Italy). At the same time, the localities with a consolidated experience of cultural diversity (i.e., a share of foreign residents in 2005 higher than the regional average), namely Cuneo, Novara and Acate, show heterogeneous situations with the first having a proactive pro-migrant approach and the other two displaying poor integration policies.

**Municipal size and economic trends seem to have no impact on the participation of the local residents in migrant integration measures either.** While in Piedmont the highest participation emerges in the rural area of Avigliana, in Sicily it emerges in the medium town of Siracusa. **Neither the most pressing issues seem to depend on municipalities' size and economic trends.** For instance, UAMs appear to be a relevant issue in Avigliana (rural area, with a variation of the income and inhabitants higher than the average of Northern Italy), Novara (medium town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants lower than the average of Northern Italy), Siracusa (medium town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants lower than the average of Southern Italy) and Caltagirone (small town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants lower than the average of Southern Italy) while migrant seasonal workers are a matter of concern in Cuneo (small town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants higher than the average of Northern Italy), Siracusa (medium town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants lower than the average of Southern Italy) and Acate (rural area, with a variation of the income and inhabitants lower than the average of Southern Italy).

## 4.2 Frames of integration (perceptions, discourses)

### 4.2.1. Novara

Interviewees from NGOs, social services, employers and trade unions describe integration as individual achievement of self-sufficiency, on one hand, and a two-ways process of mutual



exchange, on the other hand. Some interviewees from the third sector, in particular, highlight the bidirectionality of integration dynamics.

*“Integration means that without others we are not complete, it is a bi-directional process” (I-N-5, voluntary-based NGO).*

The former progressive majority talks about integration in terms of achieving self-sufficiency (having a decent job and a house), but also in terms of active social and civic participation, participation in the social life of the local community.

*“We have used the word integration a lot as a political party, to make the local population understand that migrants are people, they are not a danger; it is important for them to integrate into society, to have a job, to participate in the social life in town...” (I-N-8, Member of Opposition, progressive)*

On the contrary, the **frame of integration as adjustment to majority society and national laws and rules was reported only by the representative of the local conservative government** during the fieldwork, alongside the importance of respecting the rights of religious groups (e.g. give them the chance to have their own worship’s space). Furthermore, some declarations of the Mayor reported in the press suggest that the issue of integration of migrants is seen almost exclusively in terms of security<sup>47</sup>.

**The lack of integration policy is considered by almost all interviewees one of the main factors hindering integration** (e.g. inadequate provisions for learning Italian language, for matching companies and foreign workers, for encouraging interactions between diverse communities, etc).

**Household composition** is viewed as important as well. Many interviewees point out that integration among the young generations growing up in the same schools is a natural process, some interviewees from welfare services and NGOs go as far as to say that this is the only possible and achievable integration. Also **having a family** is regarded as a crucial factor for integration, as opposed to being single. Hence, the fact that the vast majority of post-2014 migrants who arrived in Novara are single men would constitute a disadvantageous condition for integration.

At the same time, self-segregation dynamics have been pointed out for their negative effects. Many interviewees highlight the tendency of the immigrant communities to close themselves off from the broader community, as a factor that hinders integration.

At the same time, interviewees report that the **local population is generally not very open-minded towards foreigners**, apart from some specific cases when people get to know each other or

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<sup>47</sup> See: “Il saluto del sindaco”, <https://www.comune.novara.it/it/articolo/il-saluto-del-sindaco/7624>



demonstrate good neighbourliness. Out of 14 respondents to the questionnaire, half of the respondents think that the attitudes of locals towards migrants are rather negative, and the other half think that they were neither negative nor positive. As a medium-sized town, Novara is considered neither small enough to foster interpersonal contact nor large enough to offer a multicultural environment. In addition, the local population is generally perceived by the interviewees as particularly distrustful of diversity and novelty.

*“The average age is middle-high, this town presents a clear split between young and elderly people, for the new generations there is no difference between natives and foreigners. Nevertheless, the approach of the average of natives is very conservative, very closed, and mistrustful towards foreigners, towards what goes beyond the borders of the town, integration takes place through associations and cooperatives, the average citizen sees them with fear. Compared to Turin, where they are more accustomed to dealing with people who are different. Foreigners are rarely a source of curiosity, the city experiences novelty as a nuisance” (I-N-8, Member of Opposition, progressive)*

*“In a small village there are more occasions of daily interactions and a stronger sense of community, I guess. But this is not the case of a medium-size city like Novara which is anyway a large city, with one hundred thousand inhabitants... Furthermore, medium-sized towns, compared to big metropolitans, offer less opportunities for staying anonymous and less economic opportunities” (I-N-1, professional-based NGO)*

#### 4.2.2. Cuneo

As illustrated in Table 3, the large majority of interviewees in Cuneo frames **integration** in terms of **belonging to the local community, equal opportunities for all** and, to a minor extent, as **mutual respect/acceptance**. For-profit interviewees (i.e. real estate agencies and employers) integration occurs when ethnicity and religion are not considered as relevant individual characteristics (a stance that we have classified as equal opportunities for all). The definitions elaborated by interviewed members of the local majority tend to frame integration as social cohesion, absence of conflicts, positive relations between natives and newcomers whereas high officers, although using different terms, refer to a whole-of-community concept where integration is conceived of as a process that involves all members of society and creates new ways of living together and concepts of belonging. As for the political opposition, the definition of the majority is shared by the populist opposition party; instead, the centre-right opposition frames integration as adjustment to majority society and national laws and rules.

Overall, with the relevant exception of the centre-right opposition, **integration is generally conceived of as a process that concerns both migrants and natives**, with the latter called to accept the cultural diversity, change their mindsets and not discriminate.



*“I understand it as reciprocal integration, a construction process of a reciprocal identity, that requires the flexibility of everybody, a co-construction” (I-Cu-9, local official from the municipality)*

*“I would define integration as belonging to the context, to a group, a belonging that has be reciprocal, of foreigners but also of long-established residents” (I-Cu-6 (public street-level bureaucrat)*

*“[Integration] is equal engagement. I do not believe that everybody has to participate in the same way, but that everybody has to enjoy the same possibility to participate (...) That said, integration can be declined in thousands ways, for instance as having the same rights at work” (I-Cu-3, pro-migrant NGO)*

*“[Integration is] when persons that enter a society fully participate and enjoy all its benefits” (I-Cu-12, service provider)*

*“An integrated community should not make distinctions based on race, sex or religion” (I-Cu-18, real estate agency)*

*“Integration is when the origin does not matter but individual characteristics do” (I-Cu-16 private employer)*

When asked about the specificities of small-size towns, interviewees generally underline how **Cuneo is too large to foster inter-group contacts and too small to offer a large variety of venues, places and activities** to encourage relations between migrants and natives. Moreover, they often stress how the progressive attitudes of the residents are counterbalanced by the wealth of the local community that tends to see **marginal, disadvantaged populations as a threat to urban decorum, housing value and quality of life.**

Against this backdrop, in Cuneo, the large majority of the interviewees expresses a **negative assessment of the local residents’ attitudes towards post-2014 migrants**: slightly more than 50% of respondents to the online survey describes those attitudes as rather negative while less than 25% describes them as rather or very positive. These findings could be partially explained by the interviewees’ very demanding conception of integration illustrated above: the higher are the expectations, the worse would be the assessment of the actual state of play. Moreover, the rise of negative attitudes is generally regarded as fairly recent and explained with local residents’ poor familiarity with diversity or the lacking interventions of the municipality in the face of the increasing number of (visible) migrants (see section 3.2).

**Almost none of interviewees, except for the centre-right political opposition, puts the blame on migrants** for the state of relations between newcomers and old-established residents. Rather, they



point to the **necessity of targeted interventions**. Specifically, interviewees generally identify the measures necessary to promote good relations and integration as those oriented to improve migrants' language skills and knowledge of the local context but also and especially those aimed at multiplying opportunities of encounter, informing local residents of integration dynamics and measures, and changing their attitudes through awareness raising and citizenship education. Moreover, a couple of interviewees indicate the xenophobic campaigns carried out by some national parties and amplified by media, especially during the so-called European refugee crisis, as one of the major factors that has contributed to deteriorate the attitudes towards migrants locally.

*“When I was a child there were very few coloured individuals [in Cuneo]. I remember the daughter of some friends of mine that, the first time she saw a coloured guy, she got scared and started crying. Instead, we have to educate ourselves to the contact with diversity, but it is a process that has to be steered” (I-Cu-7, pro-migrant group)*

*“[In Cuneo] there is not the idea of having a migrant friend, the relations are always seen in terms of help, compassion (...) One of the major problems of the local administration is communication (...) The communication is missing either towards those already in the networks of social help, migrants or residents that need to know what happens down the street” (I-Cu-5, expert/pro-migrant group)*

*“If you explain what you are doing or what you are obliged to do to the people, people understand, people are good, people help, but they have to be involved, have to be provided with explanations. This is completely lacking in my perspective”. (I-Cu-14, member of the opposition in the local council)*

#### 4.2.3. Avigliana and surrounding villages

Interviews in Avigliana suggest that there are no substantial differences between the frames deployed by the interviewed member of the local government and the social workers of public services and NGOs involved in the reception and integration projects. Specifically, **two frames seem to prevail: a person-centred one that defines integration as individual achievement of self-sufficiency; a community-centred one that defines integration as a two-way process.**

The person-centred one is generally conceived of as something more than mere socio-economic self-sufficiency: it is a final stage of a process in which economic self-sufficiency, inclusion in social networks, and the ability to plan one's future are the main features.

*“Integration is the outcome of a process of which housing, job, inclusion in local networks, access to public services, are components that contribute to develop the ability to plan one's own future and to make informed decisions about oneself” (I-A-1, Employment Agency, regional public social services)*



*“Integration means moving towards self-reliance, they are people who are here like all of us, and if you put them in the right conditions they can live their lives serenely, and reduce all those handicaps you have because you don't know the language, the territory...” (I-A-6, Employee of public social services)*

The other frame, as said above, defines integration in terms of bi-lateral process and mutual exchange and is shared by interviewees from the local government and professional-based and volunteer-based NGOs.

*“Integration, which is made concrete through our projects, fosters mutual knowledge of cultures, values, traditions, rights, social systems, in a perspective of interchange and mutual enrichment, through non-discrimination and inclusion of differences” (from the website of a professional-based NGO)*

**Private employers point out the learning of soft skills and cultural aspects of the hosting context** as key signs of integration. The interviewee from trade unions refer to civic participation as an important sign of integration. Regarding this aspect, this interviewee highlights the need for a cultural change within the organisations themselves, including the trade union where this change has already been in place for some time but it is not fully achieved.

Opinions on the main driving factors to achieve integration appear to be largely shared among the main stakeholders:

- a) **Positive factors:** small numbers of migrants per municipality; the high quality of the reception system; social proximity characterising small towns; positive attitudes of locals towards migrants; civic and political activism of the local community.
- b) **Negative factors:** changes in the national law with the Migration and Security Decree (see section 3.1.1.1); the lack of job opportunities especially in the lower Susa Valley (an aspect made worse by the pandemic).

Seven among the respondents to the survey stated that the local population is rather positive towards migrants, two of them assessed that the local population is very positive, and only one that the local population is neither positive nor negative towards migrants<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Moreover, it should be considered that the area is characterised by a constant flow of migrants who cross the Valley to illegally reach France. This phenomenon has prompted the mobilisation of CSOs, religious and political groups, and individual citizens who aid migrants who attempt the dangerous crossing of the border.



As for the impact of the municipalities' size, according to the interviewees, small-sized towns that are prevailing in the Valley encourage social inclusion, a sense of community, and direct interactions with local institutions.

*“Let's say that Avigliana has a very direct management of social policies, even the Councillor in the afternoon receives a lot of people of all kinds and manages all kind of problems together with the local official, sometimes he refers to us, in a small town the management of problems is less structured, and people go directly to the Councillor who comes from catholic activism and from the NO TAV movement, he is helped by the official to understand to whom to say yes and to whom to say no, and how to respond to their needs, it is a day-by-day work...” (I-A-16, professional-based NGO)*

#### 4.2.4. Siracusa

Interviews in Siracusa suggest that there are no substantial differences between the frames deployed by the interviewed member of the local government who responded to the survey and those used by other actors. More specifically, the member of the local government points to the **welcoming culture/tradition of this locality as easing integration processes**, both in terms of existing structures and locals' attitudes. The same interviewee also stresses that **integration should be understood and promoted as an emancipatory process, i.e. one that promotes the individual achievement of self-sufficiency; and that it should be a two-way process**, i.e. a process of mutual adaptation and exchange between the newcomers and other residents. Significantly, the member of local government also shows awareness of gender differences in dealing with integration challenges and of the obstacles related to labour exploitation and informal settlements.

*“It is necessary to promote an integration that is not homologation, but respect for each other's individual identity as an asset. This requires narrowing the distances between different realities. It is about breaking down barriers that are also on the side of the migrant population, who somehow tend to remain within homogeneous groups to feel protected. We see the experience of Cassibile as an important laboratory because this area has a limited number of inhabitants with some 20% of immigrant families. We know from school that this integration is tolerated but not fully achieved yet. Above all, women are imprisoned within their own communities.” (I-Si-11, Member of local government)*

In addition to the frames mentioned, **service providers, NGOs and pro-migrant groups generally disagree with the use of integration as the right word**, both in descriptive and in prescriptive terms. On the contrary, they propose alternative words or expressions to better reflect the mutual nature of integration processes. The various alternatives proposed refer to the local community and the newcomers working together to bring down cultural barriers and narrow down perceived differences. In addition, this group of actors frames work, and social and civic participation as the





key drivers and indicators of successful integration, clearly pointing to ways in which these areas of social inclusion should be promoted. Similarly, the fact that children go together to school came up as a fact that interviewees associate with successful integration.

*“We prefer to talk about social and economic inclusion. Social inclusion means also ensuring that they are treated as the other residents of Siracusa. But the long-term goal is to bring the social, cultural and language barriers. Social inclusion allows you to develop as a person and also from the point of view of employment.” (I-Si-3, No-profit service provider)*

*“The first word that comes to mind is emancipation. That's the goal, emancipation and autonomy. I always say that they have to come back here as volunteers or Arci members. (...) Having free time instead of having to work as slaves is one of the things we aim at. When they will have time off from work, then integration will be achieved.” (I-Si-5, Expert/pro-migrant group)*

As for the specificities of a medium-sized town like Siracusa, interviewees **don't consider the municipality's size as relevant while they point to more specific socio-economic dynamics**. Most interviewees cite the **welcoming culture and tradition** of this locality as facilitating inclusion processes, both because of the positive disposition of locals towards newcomers and thanks to the presence of diaspora communities and NGO networks supporting inclusion. In addition to this, another specificity mentioned is the **availability of employment in agriculture and tourism**, with the related risks of labour exploitation that have triggered local and national responses to integration challenges in this locality.

*“Certainly [the specificity] is the fact that Siracusa has always had a welcoming tradition, well before 2014. Then, the fact that there are several diaspora communities, like the Bengali and Nigerian communities, but also the Somalis, facilitates the inclusion of newcomers who can rely on an existing community. This is a strong point of support and facilitates the role of Siracusa as an attractive hub both regarding housing and employment. The negative feature of our city is legality, especially in work contracts: it is difficult to obtain a regular contract in tourism and agriculture, which are the main sectors.” (I-Si-2, No-profit service officer)*

Regarding the actors' perceptions of local attitudes, **60% of respondents to the survey describe local attitudes as rather positive**, and 30% as neither positive nor negative. This confirms the recurring narrative that this locality has a traditionally welcoming disposition towards newcomers.

#### 4.2.5. Caltagirone

Local officials and members of local government emphasise **work as both a driver and an indicator of successful integration**. In contrast to interviewees in Siracusa, here this frame comes up in a



negative key, i.e. with reference to the **lack of employment opportunities in the area that pushes most migrants to leave the locality shortly after the reception phase.**

*“The first element for true integration is work: if an immigrant manages to integrate into the productive sector, this is already a big achievement. The problem is that here there are no opportunities, in the countryside it is easier, but Caltagirone is already suffering, unemployment is very high.” (I-Ca-9, Local official from the municipality)*

Like public officials and government members, other interviewees employed references to the achievement of economic self-sufficiency to describe integration, although other elements were also widely used, including schooling, housing, language learning and participation in social life. Some of them criticise the use of integration as a descriptive/prescriptive term and emphasise the mutual nature of social inclusion processes. In this respect, some integration support measures, like targeted linguistic training, were described as inadvertently segregating and stigmatising migrants, instead of favouring social mixing (and, therefore, integration).

*“I prefer to speak of reciprocal inclusiveness, I would like to see policies that support relations tout court between people. Decision-makers should promote opportunities for encounters and exchanges in accessible contexts between people of all social groups.” (I-Ca-7, Expert)*

*“In my view, the school context is crucial. It is true that children must be enrolled in school, but enrolling them in the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) means segregating them. Unfortunately this is what happens. Minors should attend a normal school, in the morning and not in the afternoon, because in the afternoon only the kids from the reception communities go to school. This is not integration, it is a formal path to reach goals. In my opinion this system should be revised. On the other hand, we have always done projects that have brought us closer to school and to sport, because sport is fundamental for inclusion. The team makes you feel part of something.” (I-Ca-8, Private service official)*

The **absence of social mixing and intercultural encounters** were recurring themes among NGOs, no-profit service providers, experts, etc. They describe the state of integration through images conveying the absence of migrants from shared public spaces.

*“If you don’t work within the reception system, you barely notice the presence of migrants here, you might not have any perception of their presence, if not only occasionally in the streets. The reasons for this are complex, with responsibilities on all sides, and I see a tendency of the guests of reception centres to close themselves off into their group. But, after all, Caltagirone does not offer any venue for social encounters to citizens either.” (I-Ca-7, Expert)*



These findings suggest that, **while public officials, members of local government and public social workers describe the state of integration with the absence of tensions and episodes of racism, NGOs, and pro-migrant groups/actors frame the same issue as resulting from segregation and the lack of any interaction between newcomers and other locals.**

Overall, in **Caltagirone, some references to a welcoming tradition are present, but less so than in Siracusa and they are not substantiated** by further arguments. Consequently, they appeared more to be idealised self-perceptions of the local/regional culture than a frame as such.

The main specificity of the locality as a medium/left behind town can be summarised as not offering substantial opportunities for employment nor personal development, despite being – at the very least – not an openly hostile environment. The agricultural sector is seen as offering some opportunities to post-2014 migrants, although all interviews are generally pessimistic about the real opportunities for longer-term inclusion offered in their town. Still, it is underlined that, compared to bigger cities, a small town like Caltagirone has the potential for social inclusion and, as such, integration should be supported further.

*“It’s important to give voice to small localities like Caltagirone because inclusion happens here, in big cities it’s even more difficult, it is more difficult for anyone.” (I-Ca-8, No-profit service provider)*

Consistent with the frames deployed to describe the state of integration, the **interviewees’ perceptions of local attitudes are almost evenly distributed among “rather negative”, “neither negative nor positive” and “rather positive.”** Based on the interview material, it can be assumed that the responses “neither positive nor negative” and “rather positive” are motivated by the perception of a general absence of tensions and conflict rather than by positive interactions.

#### 4.2.6. Acate and Santa Croce Camerina

In this locality, the large **majority of interviewed actors** frame integration as **active social and civic participation, participation** in the social life of the local community. Instead, frames employed by **local officials/members of local government differ substantially** since they describe integration as **adjustment to majority society and national laws and rules** resulting from **1) children’s participation in school and adults’ language learning; and 2) public order enforcement**. In the first respect, this frame led to a distinction between families and single men.

*“Families are well integrated, single men are not and create problems. (...) We should ensure that their presence does not create problems for public order” (I-Ac-10, Member of local government).*



Additionally, the member of the local government describes integration as a two-way process, but points out that migrants in this locality are not doing their part when it comes to fostering mutual exchange and bringing down cultural barriers.

*“The bigger picture is that inclusion has not yet been achieved more from their side than on ours. I am referring to single men in particular.” (I-Ac-10, Member of local government)*

**Public social workers, too, describe migrants as “staying among themselves” and “not doing their part” in what should be a mutual integration/exchange process. In contrast, the presence of migrants’ children in school is brought up as a positive example and an indicator of some degree of integration.**

*“I don’t think relations with the migrants are bad, but the younger generations have some problems, but it is a widespread thing, maybe bullying or they stay in groups only among themselves.” (I-Ac-9, Employee of public service)*

*“We cannot talk of integration...let's say that they are not excluded, it's more them staying away. (...) But, after all, here there is only one school, all children go there, and as long as these children go to school together we cannot talk of segregation. There is only one basketball association, so they have to go there. Integration is happening, but it depends on both sides. Let's put it this way: they often act in a way that negatively affects our reality, some have behaviours that are not very civil.” (I-Ac-11, Employee of public social services)*

The **lack of interactions** comes up also when describing integration as the possibility for people to participate in society.

*“Let’s say that we are not in the position to say that integration is optimal because they live in agricultural areas where communication with citizens is exclusively linked to the working environment (...). There are many problems. The main is that they live outside the centre, and so it’s impossible for them to participate in social life.” (I-Ac-7, Local official from the municipality)*

The same frame is present in other, non-public, actors, but the latter **put the blame on local authorities rather than migrants**.

*“Spatial segregation prevents any participation. Occasions for encounters are rare and there has never been a mediation to facilitate those encounters.” (I-Ac-4, Expert/pro-migrant group)*



Importantly, the **self-sufficiency frame is still present as a driver and indicator of integration**, although in Acate and Santa Croce Camerina **more emphasis is put on the need for work to be regular and not exploitative**. This can be explained by the awareness-raising initiatives carried out in the surrounding rural area to tackle this issue.

*“Some employers are willing to help their migrant employees, others just take advantage of them.” (I-Ac-6, Real estate union)*

*“Work is what brings nationals and non-nationals together. It is about rewarding them. Conflicts arise when there are no equal opportunities.” (I-Ac-1, Private employer)*

*“Integration is about recognizing each other’s contribution to society and the economy,” underlying that this is not usually the case in the locality due to segregation, spatial isolation, and exploitative working conditions.” (I-Ac-4, Expert/pro-migrant group)*

As in Siracusa, interviewees **don't consider the municipality's size as relevant while they point to specific socio-economic dynamics**. The main specificities of the area that come up during the interviews - and are shared with many Italian rural areas - are 1) labour and housing exploitation related to agricultural labour; 2) and isolation of those migrants living near the fields and the risk of their segregation in informal camps, as illustrated above. In contrast, the desired goal or successful integration indicator as described by the interviewees would be *“using social spaces together without this being perceived as ‘weird.’” (I-Ac-2, Non-profit service provider)*.

As for the interviewees' perception of local attitudes, **despite the limited number of responses, these are perceived as being rather negative or neither negative nor positive**. Still, some respondents describe them as rather positive. Based on the qualitative interviews conducted with the same respondents, it can be assumed that these more positive responses are motivated mainly by the absence of significant interactions. Therefore, they are still compatible with more critical views of local attitudes.



Table 3: Dominant frames in different localities

	Dominant Frames used by local policymakers/public officials	Dominant frames used by other actors (might be slit in more columns, distinguishing per different types of actors)
Novara	<p>Progressive majority: Integration as a the individual achievement of self-sufficiency,; Integration as a two-way process (mutual adaptation, mutual learning, mutual exchange);Integration as active social and civic participation, participation in the social life of the local community</p> <p>Conservative majority: Integration as adjustment to majority society and national laws and rules; integration as the individual achievement of self-sufficiency</p>	<p>Integration as the individual achievement of self-sufficiency</p> <p>Integration as a two-way process (mutual adaptation, mutual learning, mutual exchange)</p> <p>Integration as active social and civic participation, participation in the social life of the local community</p>
Cuneo	<p>Integration as social cohesion, absence of conflicts, positive relations between natives and newcomer</p> <p>Integration as Whole of community concept, integration as a process that involves all members of society and creates something new</p>	<p>Integration as acquiring a sense of belonging, or “a feeling of affinity and acceptance”</p> <p>Integration as presence of equal opportunities for all</p>
Avigliana and surrounding municipalities	<p>Integration as the individual achievement of self-sufficiency</p> <p>Integration as a two-way process (mutual adaptation, mutual learning, mutual exchange)</p>	<p>Integration as the individual achievement of self-sufficiency</p> <p>Integration as a two-way process (mutual adaptation, mutual learning, mutual exchange)</p> <p>Integration as active social and civic participation, participation in the social life of the local community</p>
Siracusa	<p>Integration as a two-way process (mutual adaptation, mutual learning, mutual exchange)</p>	<p>Integration as a two-way process (mutual adaptation, mutual learning, mutual exchange)</p> <p>Integration as the individual achievement of self-sufficiency</p> <p>Integration as active social and civic participation, participation in the social life of the local community.</p>



Caltagirone	<p>Integration as the individual achievement of self-sufficiency</p> <p>Integration as social cohesion, absence of conflicts, positive relations between natives and newcomers</p>	<p>Integration as the individual achievement of self-sufficiency</p> <p>Integration as active social and civic participation, participation in the social life of the local community.</p> <p>Integration as social cohesion, absence of conflicts, positive relations between natives and newcomers</p>
Acate and Santa Croce Camerina	Integration as adjustment to majority society and national laws and rules	Integration as active social and civic participation, participation in the social life of the local community.

#### 4.2.7. Comparative remarks

The **recurrent elements of the identified frames seem to be individual achievement of self-sufficiency**, on one hand, and **a two-way process (mutual adaptation, mutual learning, mutual exchange)**, on the other hand. Against this backdrop, **conservative policymakers and public officials** show different frames: they tend to focus on **migrants’ adjustment to majority society and national laws and rules** and to put the blame of poor integration on migrants, rejecting the idea of integration as mutual adjustment.

As for residents' attitudes towards migrants, in **conservative localities the majority of survey’s respondents regard the attitudes of local residents towards migrants as mainly negative**, with the exception of Caltagirone where interviewees’ perceptions of local attitudes are almost evenly distributed among rather negative, neither negative nor positive and rather positive. However, the last two options seem to be motivated by the perception of a general absence of tensions and conflicts rather than by positive interactions. **In the progressive localities, the opposite is true: the majority of respondents think that attitudes towards migrants are mainly positive**, with the exception of Cuneo, where slightly more than half of the respondents describe those attitudes as negative. This could be explained by the fact that Cuneo is a very wealthy locality and, as said above, the local community tends to see marginal, disadvantaged populations as a threat to urban decorum, housing value, and quality of life. This perception has been amplified by the growing presence of homeless migrants as well as of foreign people involved in drug dealing around the railway station.

Finally, **when asked about the impact of the municipality’s size over integration, respondents of medium- and small-size towns show different opinions in the North and South of Italy**. In Novara and Cuneo (Piedmont) they tend to underline that the dimension of these localities is neither small enough to foster interpersonal contacts nor large enough to offer a multicultural environment. In Siracusa and Caltagirone (Sicily), in contrast, the size and social fabric of the city are seen as conducive to integration, although in Caltagirone in terms of potential rather than of



actual developments. **As for rural areas, the economic context makes a difference.** While in Avigliana, where manufacturing and services are the prevailing economic sectors, the small size of towns of the area is regarded as a factor enabling inter-group relations, in Acate the large employment of migrants in agriculture tends to foster their labour exploitation and segregation in isolated areas, thus hampering interactions and integration.

## 4.3 MLG Dynamics in integration policy-making (local, btw, levels)

### 4.3.1. Mapping the networks

Using the data collected through the survey, Collegio Carlo Alberto has run the social network analysis mapping the interactions in each locality between actors. For methodological reasons, estate agencies, public employers, and transnational municipal networks have been excluded from the networks. As for the Italian case studies, the non-responses have led us to exclude Acate as a whole while the case of Cuneo does not include members of local political majority and opposition. Moreover, the discrepancies between the qualitative interviews and the online survey have led us to disregard the network analysis concerning Novara (see the Appendix, Figure A1).

#### 4.3.1.1. Novara

Social network analysis suggests that in Novara **integration networks revolve around professional NGOs managing CAS facilities and few nationwide voluntary-based NGOs.**

Those networks are particularly **fragmented**. The peak of arrivals of asylum seekers in 2015 triggered an **attempt to build a platform of organisations with advocacy functions**. This network included a managing organisation of a CAS facility (Integra), a training agency based in the district of S. Agabio (Filos Formazione), Caritas and other NGOs and pro-migrant associations, and was called **“Beyond Black (Oltre il nero)”**. However, the activities of the network have been rather **discontinuous and stopped in 2018**.

*“There was an attempt to create a platform that was called “Oltre il Nero”, we also organised a few events open to the citizens, but then the attempt to create a stable coordination on the issue failed...”*  
(I-N-1, professional-based NGO)

Moreover, the peak of arrivals of UAMs in 2016-2017 stimulated **another attempt to develop a platform of organisations on the integration of unaccompanied foreign minors, which however also ran aground after a short time**. According to some interviewees, this happened because of the preference of the largest NGOs to have bi-lateral relationships with public actors (municipality,





social services, Prefecture) and with the other smaller organisations rather than participating in a larger network since the latter was regarded as more conflictual.

As a matter of fact, the **main venues of cooperation are offered by EU and regional programmes**. The Interreg project “Minplus”, started in November 2018, constitutes a cross-national platform about reception and integration of adult asylum seekers and unaccompanied foreign minors. The project network officially includes two local NGOs. Starting from Autumn 2021, the municipality participated in some project activities aimed at creating a local platform on integration of UAMs and young migrants which includes local NGOs and public entities. Furthermore, the regional project on victims of trafficking “Strong Ring” (see section 3.1.4.1) represents an opportunity to interact with the regional government but involves only NGOs.

According to the interviewees, contacts between local and national levels are extremely limited, with the exception of few national-level NGOs and trade unions that have more frequent contacts with national-level actors.

#### 4.3.1.2. Cuneo

In Cuneo, we can identify **four main local platforms of cooperation** around post-2014 migrant integration that share some key features. First, **none of them have been formalised** or hold a juridical status: they are informal, issue-based platforms. Second, we observe a **high degree of coordination between the local NGOs and a proactive role played by the municipality**. Third, the **business community**, although regarded as a key actor, is **almost absent** in those networks and perceived as difficult to engage. The **same is for migrant organisations**. Fourth, the local networks develop on two different, **intertwined territorial levels, i.e. the municipal and the provincial ones**, whereas relations beyond the province’s borders are rather poor.

The **network analysis** based on the survey confirms that those features belong also to the general policy network of the town developed around post-2014 migrant integration. Indeed, the network in Cuneo shows a **high density (4.8)**. Moreover, **officials from the municipality appear as the most central nodes** but also non-public service providers and pro-migrant NGOs are very well connected (see Appendix, Figure A.1). Members of local minorities appear as much more marginal, although the Deputy Mayor for Social Policies has rather intense exchanges with the local actors managing public and non-public integration services. However, those exchanges are generally of technical rather than of political nature and often happen in one of the four above-mentioned platforms, called “Small Table”, which both the officials and the Deputy Mayor participate in, so that respondents might have classified them as interactions with municipal officials rather than with the political majority. The business community and migrant organisations have a marginal role, although with the first more connected than the second. Yet, the qualitative interviewees suggest that the contacts with private companies are mainly aimed at finding internship and job opportunities for single migrants rather than at defining common strategies and interventions. Finally, regional and national policy-makers are very peripheral in the network, confirming the prevailing local scope of the latter.



After scratching the fundamental features of the local networks, we now describe the development and functions of the four above-mentioned local platforms, two of which gather together local NGOs while the other two are coordinated by the municipality and connect the latter with NGOs.

The **oldest platform is “Rifugiati in Rete - Networked Refugees”**, established in 2015 - also thanks to the economic support and the legitimation coming from the bank Foundation Cassa di Risparmio of Cuneo - by a group of social cooperatives in order to cope with the exponential growth of governmental CAS in the province in 2014-2016, a large share of which was poorly managed by private for-profit actors. At the very beginning the network was formalised but the formal agreement, then considered unnecessary, was dropped later on. The main aims of the network have been to promote high quality shared standards for the management of reception and integration services, foster peer-to-peer learning and diffusion of good practices, encourage the collaboration between civil society organisations and the public authorities (contrasting the disengagement of the latter) not only in asylum seekers’ reception but also in community development. Hence, this network has combined practice-oriented and advocacy-oriented goals.

The **second platform is named “Minerali Clandestini - Clandestine Minerals”<sup>49</sup>**, was established in Autumn 2018 and can be regarded as a pro-migrant advocacy coalition that acts beyond the municipality of Cuneo, covering other areas of the province as well. It brings together around 50 locally rooted realities (although those actually active are less, around 20%), such as local social cooperatives, associations and charities, local branches of national and international NGOs (eg. Amnesty International), local left-wing opposition parties, trade unions. The organisations belonging to “Rifugiati in Rete” are part of the network as well. The main objective of “Minerali Clandestini” is sharing information and advocating in favour of migrants. In this perspective, the network has organised a couple of mobilisations, one against the national Security and Migration Decree in 2018 and the other against a local ordinance forbidding sleeping outside adopted by the Municipality of Cuneo in September 2020 during the Covid-19 emergency in 2020. Beside those mobilisations, the network engages in the public debate through local media and public events. The internal relations are not always easy to manage given the highly diverse profile and mission of the members. One of the main cleavages is between the organisations managing public services, that are regarded as more shy in contesting local authorities, and those more committed to the watchdog role.

The **other two platforms are working groups gathered by the municipality to foster coordination of the local initiatives and the dialogue among the main stakeholders**. The smallest working groups (informally called “**Tavolino - Small Table**”) encompasses the professional NGOs that run municipal services and projects regarding migration and asylum, and the voluntary-based NGOs providing key local services with a high share of foreign beneficiaries, i.e. generally local branches of national organisation such as Caritas and Red Cross. Mainstream welfare services participate when needed. The meetings are frequent and aimed at sharing policy strategies and solving practical problems.

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<sup>49</sup> Clandestine Minerals takes its name from a temporary exposition and the relative training and seminar initiatives held in Cuneo in the Autumn 2018 around the extraction and management of the mineral resources employed to produce technological devices such as smartphones.



The second working group (called **“Tavolone - Large Table”**) was established in 2018 and includes smaller voluntary-based NGOs and groups, mainly mobilised around the local parishes, and advocacy coalitions such as “Clandestine Minerals”. According to the municipality, the “Large Table” is aimed at mapping the needs and sharing the general directions while the interviewed participants feel that is mainly used to inform the main stakeholders about the municipal strategies and decisions with little room for co-decision.

The “Large Table” and “Small Table” partially overlap since the first includes the latter. It is worth underling that the first often sees the latter as a sort of exclusive net involving few key local actors and regards the municipality as unable to really coordinate all the diverse local actors active in the field of migrant integration. More generally, some smaller, voluntary-based organisations involved in the “Large Table” complain about a decrease in the relations with the municipality due, according to them, to the declining pressure of problems after the end of the European refugee crisis and the consequent local authorities’ lower need to seek NGOs’ collaboration.

The municipality appears aware about the small size of the “Small Table” and, more precisely, about the limited available pool of professionals and experts in migrant integration compared to big cities so that competition and the diversity of skills are lower than desired. At the same time, the medium-small size of the town is considered as able to foster informal and frequent exchange as well as a tight cooperation while avoiding the self-referentiality attributed to smaller settlements.

*“The dimension of this town matters, since the realities working on social issues are not a hundred thousand. And they have seen the possibility to provide solutions stemming from the intertwining of various projects. The fact that social workers are always the same - in my perspective, this is not an element that fosters high quality, I do not look for that since I think that competition can bring about fresh solutions, therefore there isn’t any attempt to stay closed, instead the opposite - the fact that some social workers talk with each others and could seize the opportunities has led to this system” (I-Cu-11, member of the local government)*

As said above, the **relations beyond the province’s borders are few**. Among the NGOs, only “Networked Refugees” belongs to European networks (i.e. Europea Asilo) and has stable cooperation with realities outside the province, especially for getting trained. “Clandestine Minerals” has been engaged in national mobilisations such as those to reform the very restrictive Italian nationality law (*L’Italia sono anch’io*), to fight the Decree Security and Migration of 2018, and to regularise undocumented migrants during the pandemic (*Io ero straniero*) - but it has not stable collaboration with realities outside the province.

Also the relations of the Municipalities of Cuneo with other local administrations are largely limited to the province. Specifically, the **municipality belongs to two different inter-municipality networks**, i.e. the provincial SAI network made up of 16 municipalities, and the network of 10 municipalities for the accomodation of migrants employed as seasonal workers in agriculture that signed the provincial Protocol.



Finally, the dialogue with the higher levels of governance is scarce and, in the case of the regione, has declined with the shift from centre-left to centre-right majority in June 2019.

*“I still think that we, as local administrations, are alone (I-Cu-11, member of the local government)*

*“Alone with regard to other levels of government?”*

*“Exactly”*

*“The impression of local administrations is that they have to face a too big situation relying only on their own” (I-Cu-14, member of the opposition in the local council)*

*“Starting from institutions, we have to note a total absence, both for practical interventions and dialogue, of the region that participates in the big tables but only formally. The [previous centre-left] majority led by Chiamparino did some steps forward in the planning of a path for promoting regular employment in agriculture and reception of seasonal workers, a Protocol that started from the gangmater system and included black and grey work, in order to set up intervention groups working on those issues. That stuff has remained stuck or, better, forgotten in the drawer with the change of regional majority” (I-Cu-7, pro-migrant group)*

Indeed, as explained in section 3.1.2, municipalities are generally represented in decision venues by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) which is however regarded as not very representative of local authorities, especially those of the smaller town and villages.

#### 4.3.1.3. Avigliana and surrounding villages

The social network analysis suggests that Avigliana is characterised by a **close-knit network in terms of social policies, including those addressing migrants**. This network primarily **involves local politicians, voluntary-based and professional NGOs but also some local companies** that are sensitive to the issue of integration. Sometimes the same people, often with a background of Christian or/and leftist activism, take on key roles in different organisations involved in various ways in the dynamics of integration.

Among these actors, **pro-migrant organisations have played a significant role**, both by setting up spontaneous activities and by acting in connection with the projects developed in the valley (e.g. MAD, POLI, Tomorrow Together). The **venues for exchange are mainly offered by these partnership projects**, although resources and information are often shared informally as well.

On the contrary, the **involvement of business organisations is weak**. Estate agencies and **employers' associations are not represented** at all in this network. **Trade unions play a limited role**



in relation to this network, although they offer information and assistance services targeting migrant workers, including post-2014 migrants.

In terms of relations with other levels of governance, it should be noted that the **most frequently mentioned actor is the Prefecture**, meanwhile relations with other **institutions at national and European level are reported as rare**. According to the local government's representative, the rare interactions with Italian and European parliamentarians during the phase of implementation of the MAD project was also the result of the choice to not turn the spotlight on this subject, over-politicising this issue. The main interlocutions with Italian and European parliamentarians took place in some specific occasions, for example during the protests against the Migration and Security Decree<sup>50</sup>.

The **relations between the municipalities of the Valley are very intense**, and **Avigliana, as the most populated municipality, has often played a leading role**, as explained in section 4.1.3. The start-up of the MAD was marked by frequent interactions between the Councillor of Social Policy and Youth Policy of Avigliana and the representatives of the other smaller municipalities that joined the project and this happened regardless of their political orientation.

Significant interactions with other municipalities across Italy happened during the design phase of MAD. The project was indeed inspired by exchanges with Riace (Calabria) and the municipalities of Valle Camonica (Lombardy) which took place primarily within the RECOSOL platform, i.e. a cross-national network aimed at promoting cross-national cooperation projects and involving municipalities from all over Italy and other European countries.

*"I am part of the council of the network of solidaristic municipalities, RECOSOL, and this has fostered exchanges on reception system, we held a conference in Matera in 2015 on this issue, for example in Valcamonica there was already a project like the MAD project that started from the initiative of cooperatives and then involved the local administrators... On the contrary, we had few interactions with EU and national MPs, maybe we should have involved more with the higher decision-making levels, but we didn't want to turn the spotlight too much on this issue..." (I-A-7, Member of local government, progressive)*

The **network analysis** based on the survey confirms that the **public social services and pro-migrant NGOs are the most central nodes** in the local network, but also that the non-public service providers and local officials are very well connected (see the Appendix, Figure A1). Local government and local councillors are also well connected with non-public service providers and public social services. Private companies appear to be well-connected with non-public service providers. The qualitative interviewees suggest that the contacts with private companies are mainly aimed at finding

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<sup>50</sup>See: "Mille in corteo con i sindaci della Val Susa e Avigliana contro il decreto sicurezza", La Stampa, 26/1/2019

[https://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/01/26/news/mille\\_in\\_corteo\\_con\\_i\\_sindaci\\_della\\_val\\_susa\\_ad\\_avigliana\\_contro\\_il\\_decreto\\_sicurezza-217533245/](https://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/01/26/news/mille_in_corteo_con_i_sindaci_della_val_susa_ad_avigliana_contro_il_decreto_sicurezza-217533245/)



internship and job opportunities for single migrants rather than at defining common strategies and interventions. Members of local opposition parties and migrant associations are rather peripheral. EU officials, national officials and members of the national government are very peripheral in the network, confirming the prevailing local scope of the latter.

#### 4.3.1.4. Siracusa

Regarding Siracusa, the **social network analysis** suggests that this locality presents a **close-knit network** consisting mainly of the municipality, pro-migrant NGOs, the Prefecture, the region, employers, and unions (see the Appendix, Figure A1). Unlike the other case studies in Sicily, the municipality's involvement in reception programmes has run against mismanagement problems by service providers. However, its involvement in integration initiatives, particularly with the Prefecture, pro-migrant NGOs, unions and employers' organisations, remain significant through the AMIF and PON projects described in section 4.1.4.

In addition to these projects, **another catalyst of relations in Siracusa's local network are pro-migrant NGOs, and particularly Accoglierete, Arci, and CIAO** which are involved in multiple projects with the municipality. The genesis of Accoglierete and, more recently, the capacity-building project Comune dei Popoli are illustrative examples of the role of local NGOs in advocating for better inclusion policies.

This picture has not been affected by the pandemic and relations within this network have remained substantially unchanged.

#### 4.3.1.5. Caltagirone

The **social network analysis** (see the Appendix, Figure A1) suggests that, in Caltagirone, **integration networks revolve around reception programmes** and are formed by NGOs, including both the cooperatives which serve as reception service providers and other pro-migrant organisations (the already-mentioned Caritas, ASTRA, and Arci). **Trade unions (CGIL) are actively involved** in orientation services and collaborate with NGOs in the framework of reception programmes, particularly in accompanying beneficiaries towards autonomous service access. **Officials from the municipality and public social services are closely involved** in reception provision, although **NGOs generally perceive them as not fully supportive** and focused on bureaucratic and administrative functions.

The **business sector is part of this local network, although its role remains rather marginal**. Local companies are involved in traineeships for reception service beneficiaries, leading, in some cases, to longer-term work contracts, rather than in interventions' design and implementation.

This general framework has not changed significantly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Non-public service providers have remained the pivot of local integration efforts, despite disruptions in in-person meetings and activities.



This collaborative climate has been occasionally disrupted by the local opposition's right-wing demonstrations that regarded the Cassibile area and its informal settlements. These protests, however, have generally been isolated, short-termed, and targeted at attracting media attention more than voicing substantial claims.

#### 4.3.1.6. Acate and Santa Croce Camerina

This locality has been excluded from the network mapping due to the insufficient number of surveys collected from the local administration and public officials.

Despite this, **interviews** and evidence on existing initiatives suggest that, in this locality and the surrounding rural area, there is **an informal network of NGOs and civil society actors collaborating** to provide assistance to post-2014 migrants dispersed in a vast rural area and with no access to services and adequate housing. The most significant network is formed by national and international NGOs (Caritas, Proxima, IOM) with trade unions (CGIL) also active. This support network is generally stable although it operates on a project basis and, taken as a whole, has no longer-term strategy. The pivot of the network and the place where most activities take place is the Caritas presidium in Marina di Acate (rural area at the outskirts of the main centre), which offers basic services to those living in the fields or close to the greenhouses.

Importantly, **NGOs and trade unions put pressure on the local administration** and the public sector for more structural and systematic interventions. These instances are brought up in the Territorial Council and in the five Thematic Tables run by the Prefecture of Ragusa.

Lastly, it should be noted that employers in the local agricultural sector are not involved in any of these networks.

#### 4.3.1.7. Comparative remarks

**Political tradition seems to also affect local networks. All progressive localities** (Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa) **show close-knit networks**, with NGOs and municipalities playing a crucial role. Moreover, in those localities **pro-migrant groups are relevant actors**.

On the contrary, **in localities with a conservative tradition** (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate) **the networks around post-2014 migrant integration are much weaker and the municipality is almost absent**.

**Everywhere, the business community occupies a marginal position**: individual private companies are reached out by the other local actors only for finding internships or jobs for migrants, without participating in common integration initiatives and measures.



## 4.3.2. Actors' functions and their roles in governance networks

### 4.3.2.1. Novara

**The municipality adopted a pro-active approach** in terms of integration of post-2014 migrants **when the centre-left coalition was in power (2011-2016); subsequently, the centre-right government initially discouraged initiatives aimed at integrating adult post-2014 migrants, while developing a proactive approach towards UAMs over time (see section 4.3.1).** Hence, the role of the local administration in governance networks over post-2014 integration has changed and diminished over time.

The main component of the municipality involved in post-2014 integration are the **municipal social services**, since they deal with most vulnerable people (including those post-2014 migrants hosted in first-shelters for homeless) and are responsible for UAMs. Yet, their engagement over UAMs started to increase from the end of 2021, when they entered the local platform set up within the INTERREG project “Minplus” (see section 4.3.1).

**NGOs managing reception facilities have promoted integration measures within the reception system in synergy with other NGOs such as training agencies**, especially before the financial constraints introduced in 2018. At the same time, the main national level voluntary-based NGOs (S. Egidio and Caritas) active in Novara carry out important interventions in the territory, also in relation to post-2014 migrants, such as language classes, social housing interventions and migrants' accommodation by local families<sup>51</sup>.

**Neighbourhood and ethnic associations set up spontaneous initiatives** (e.g artistic workshops and multi-cultural events) in which some post-2014 migrants also participate. However, these associations are carried out by volunteers, with few resources and scarce available time. So, they seem to play a marginal role, both in providing services and in advocating. Although, ethnic chains seem to be the main channel to integrate into the local segregated society.

The **trade unions**<sup>52</sup>, as the interviewee refers, **carries out activities to give information and legal assistance to workers, and among them migrant workers.** Entrepreneurs often offer informal support to single individuals, for instance by accompanying their post-2014 migrant workers when looking for a decent housing solution, playing the role of “reliable mediators” with the landlords. Instead, the **employer's association does not play a role in this field.** Estate agencies do not play

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<sup>51</sup> See: <https://www.minplusproject.eu/accoglienza-e-integrazione-lesperienza-della-diocesi-di-novara-con-rifugiato-a-casa-mia/>

<sup>52</sup> The trade union representative seems to acknowledge aspects of the biographic trajectories of post-2014 migrants that escape the attention of the organisations who managed reception: the arrival of post-2014 migrants from reception centres located in other cities, the mechanisms of insertion of migrants in the logistics sector where dynamics of exploitation and subcontracting prevail.





any role, either. Generally private for-profit actors are not involved in any policy or project specifically aimed at fostering the inclusion of post-2014 migrants, or migrants in general.

In Novara, bi-lateral relationships between organisations seem to prevail with respect to specific cases of vulnerable migrants, especially with regard to implementation while there is a lack of cooperation in policy formulation and of coordination between all public and private actors involved in integration.

#### 4.3.2.2. Cuneo

The **municipality plays a key role** in the governance of local integration policies addressing post-2014 migrants. Specifically, its functions consist of “promoting working groups to **steer and co-design the interventions with local actors, guaranteeing rights and political steering, providing or finding resources**” (I-Cu-9, official from the municipality).

**Professional NGOs are providers of all municipal integration services and partners in almost all the project-based initiatives, co-designing both services and projects with the municipality.** This has been the result of two main processes. On the one hand, “Networked Refugees” has always lobbied for an expansion of local authorities' role in the province of Cuneo to contrast public disengagement and delegation of migrant reception and integration policies to the third sector (bottom-up process). As a result, in Cuneo municipal reception and integration measures have expanded. On the other hand, the local political majority elected in 2017 and the consequent appointment of a new Deputy Mayor for Social Policies have led to a substantial enhancement of the collaboration between the municipality and the local professional NGOs, a large share of which belongs to “Networked Refugees” (top-down process).

*“What are the factors that have led to this strict collaboration with third sector organisations?”*

*“It is the result of a political vision, it has been a political choice, and the result of a series of projects funded through calls for projects and the initiative of the cooperatives....” (I-Cu-11, member of the local government)*

In contrast, **voluntary-based NGOs** provide either **first-aid services or third accommodation solutions and first shelter, mainly employing their own resources and thus maintaining their own independence.** On one hand, this allows for expanding the services without multiplying the public investment; on the other hand, the professionalism and approaches of those key services appear rather heterogeneous. Moreover, voluntary-based NGOs and local parishes **support post-2014 migrants in everyday life** (practicing Italian language, preparing the exams for the car license, baby-sitting, etc.).

As explained in section 4.3.1, **mainstream public welfare services are more marginal** in post-2014 migrant integration than NGOs. Still, **social services** are responsible for UAMs, participate in the SAI interdisciplinary team and intervene on individual cases of vulnerable migrants.



In the **field of employment** of post-2014 migrants, **for-profit and non-profit employment agencies** seem to play a bigger role than public employment agencies in **post-2014 migrants' recruitment**, although the for-profit ones are not involved in local integration policies. **Trade unions (CGIL) advocate in favour of migrants' rights and have offices dedicated to migrants** where they provide information and legal assistance, but they appear as poorly connected with the local initiatives. **Employers organisations are almost absent** from any governance arrangement over migrant integration with the exception of the main employer organisation in agriculture (Coldiretti) that plays some role in the AMIF-project "Good Land" by providing employers with containers to host seasonal workers. Yet, those activities concern municipalities around Saluzzo rather than Cuneo. The marginality of the business community is explained by the interviewees, on the one hand, by the disengagement and profit-oriented attitudes of the employers and their associations with a consequent little interest for migrants' integration and rights and, on the other hand, by the fact that the municipalities have no formal competences in the field of employment so that they have no tool to get employers involved.

Against this backdrop, **the local government has promoted two working groups to foster local governance over migrant integration**. Beside the "Small Table" and "Large Table" illustrated in section 4.3.1, the new municipal office Meet Point (see section 4.1) has been designed to strengthen the local governance of migrant integration and the collaboration between the municipality and NGOs. First of all, NGOs managing it were selected through a **co-planning procedure**<sup>53</sup>, which is still seldom employed in Italy and allows third sector organisations to participate in service design and definition of local interventions. Secondly, as written on the website, the Meet Point should be "capable of favouring an integrated development dynamic starting from existing realities, projects, territorial vocations, resources and local communities where the municipal administration covers the role of organiser of a new model of 'urban welfare' (...). The innovative character lies in the construction of a multilevel territorial governance model, which includes and manages regulatory, financial and organisational aspects concerning the taking charge and accompaniment of people of foreign origin present in the territory". Indeed, the Meet Point includes two "meta-areas" aimed at favouring the coordination of local interventions and projects addressing migrants, specifically:

- a "Projects Area", which aims to be the response to the needs of the territory by fostering the local actors' participation in calls for projects and the development of complementarities and synergies between local projects and initiatives;
- a "Governance Area", which should identify, manage and coordinate the various actors operating in the field of migrant integration and promote an integrated system of actions, stakeholders, beneficiaries.

Indeed, social workers perceive an improvement in the coordination of various initiatives as a consequence of those strategies, although we cannot say a final word on that given that the fieldwork took place a few months after the setting up of the Meet Point.

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<sup>53</sup> Determinazione dirigenziale n. 2248 del 31 dicembre 2020, Municipality of Cuneo.



#### 4.3.2.3. Avigliana and surrounding villages

As mentioned above, **policy makers have played a leading role in promoting reception and integration measures. Professional NGOs play a key role, alongside policy makers, both in policy formulation and implementation** of both reception and project-based integration measures. Within this framework, the local network shows a rather good ability to attract resources.

On the other hand, **voluntary-based NGOs and single citizens, connected in an informal solidarity network, play a significant role**, promoting **spontaneous initiatives**. Examples of these voluntary-based associations are sport associations that engage young migrants in their activities without charging them; theater and art associations which organise performances, public events and courses; retired Italian teachers and individual citizens who offer their help in various ways. This has stimulated initiatives involving professional-based NGOs and, on the other hand, constitutes a fundamental resource for the social inclusion trajectories of post-2014 migrants within the frame of more structured projects (MAD, POLI, Tomorrow Together). Finally, in a context where it is easy to establish direct relations, **volunteers often act in dialogue with institutions, mayors and policy makers**. This was the case, for example, of the initiatives for including young people hosted in the Almese collective CAS facility (see section 4.2.3).

*"I remember we were on a bench, the mayor of Almese and me, and we were wondering what to do for these young people, to help them" (I-A-5, voluntary-based NGO).*

Among the other actors, (Con.I.S.A), the local Employment Agency and the Provincial Centre for Adult Education appear particularly relevant

**Con.I.S.A, i.e. the local consortium of social services in the lower Susa Valley, is primarily involved in the reception and protection of UAMs.** Furthermore, it represents a point of reference for all social policies. Con.I.S.A changes also depending on the specific project: in the case of the upper Valley MAD project it assumed the role of leader organisation; in other projects (as POLI, Tomorrow Together, Time to Time) it is a partner directly involved in the implementation. In particular, **Con.I.SA works in close synergy with NGOs**, complementing their intervention, especially in cases of social vulnerability (e.g internships for disadvantaged people and housing assistance, emergency houses).

Also the **public Employment Agency, although with limited responsibilities, has a collaborative attitude** with respect to the integration measures implemented within these specific projects. It was a reference point especially in relation to the administrative aspects for the activation of the traineeships within the MAD project and it currently hosts one of the offices of the POLI project.

The **Provincial Centre for Adult Education also plays a significant role in the implementation of specific projects.** For example, beyond offering Italian classes, it has also promoted internships for unaccompanied foreign minors within the project Tomorrow Together.

#### 4.3.2.4. Siracusa



In Siracusa, policy makers in the municipality have had an important institutional role in implementing integration policies at the local level, being proactive in engaging with and promoting national and local initiatives. Specifically, the municipality has taken on the role of leading partner in several AMIF-funded projects and in the PON Legality project in Cassibile, with the Prefecture and the region's support. In this framework, the municipality has shown to have the capacity to engage with multiple stakeholders and keep a pivotal role in integration policy networks.

At the same time, the **bottom-up initiatives of local NGOs and pro-migrant groups have had an important catalyst role in the implementation of the projects above**, but also in their **formulation, by mobilising support around specific issues (i.e. voluntary guardianship) and to improve integration services locally** (i.e. through capacity building and improved service access).

**Trade unions**, including through their relations with employers' organisations (i.e. the above-mentioned the Bilateral Agricultural Entity (EBAT)), **have an advocacy role**, trying to act as mediators with employers, and are active in accommodation support. Employment mediators interact with employers' organisations, the Municipality of Siracusa and those of neighbouring localities, to facilitate and promote regular contracts and good working conditions.

*“The elements that have contributed to this process [referring to Cassibile] are mainly the ability to share among local associations. We hooked up with the municipal administration of Siracusa, then there were some revolutions within the administration [referring to a change of half of the council due to the resignation of Italia Viva and PD members of local government], but I must say that we managed to obtain results. Thanks to the significant sensitivity of the Prefecture, with which we have established a relationship of sharing the need to fight against the gangmaster system, we have managed to keep everyone onboard.” (I-S-1, Trade union)*

Overall, in Siracusa, the proactive management of integration policies by the municipality combined with the local social capital of NGOs and pro-migrant groups have allowed the development of successful initiatives. Importantly, this has happened despite the challenging context of the Cassibile informal settlements.

#### 4.3.2.5. Caltagirone

In Caltagirone, the role of local policy makers and of the administration is limited to entrusting the implementation of SAI reception programmes to local NGOs. The municipality's social services offer cultural mediation services, monitor and regularly meet private service providers, and have the legal guardianship of UAMs.

The local administration's representative describes the role of the municipality “as creator of a cooperative network of CSOs and volunteer organisations,” also with the goal of “avoiding duplications” in the service provided (I-Ca-10, Mayor). Yet, this view is supported neither by the general analysis of the local context nor by the feedback of the NGO actors interviewed. As



mentioned previously, in fact, the latter describe the municipality as generally disengaged or not supportive of pro-integration initiatives.

**Public service providers and public officials have a role of universalistic service provision.** During the interviews, it emerged that **they perceive their services as having little relevance for migrant integration**, although post-2014 migrants are among their users. In addition, public service providers appear to rely on private service providers for updated information on the procedures linked to immigration and integration. Among these public service providers, the Employment Centre has regular and collaborative interactions with non-profit service providers for the registration of asylum seekers and international protection holders in the job placement databases and related procedures.

Public social services and, in particular, the guardianship office of the municipality, appears to have little or no role, possibly for lack of implementation of existing norms, personnel shortages, and general disengagement.

*“We are also involving the social service of the municipality [in awareness-raising activities on foster care of UAMs]. The Foster Care Center, however, seems to be an empty box. In theory the good intentions are there, but it is still a process to be developed.” (I-Ca-7, Expert).*

In contrast, **private service providers and NGOs are more active in the field and have “a role of support and activation of the territorial network”** (I-Ca-7, Expert). NGOs managing SAI as well as trade unions involved in service provision (Patronato CGIL) try to accompany users to autonomous service access to prepare them for the post reception stage through training and information provision. AMIF projects are the main source of funding in this respect.

**Local private employers engage with private service providers through the activation of traineeships funded with reception programmes funds or municipal funding.**

**On paper, real estate agencies are part of a collaboration agreement** with private service providers within the SAI system, **but these partnerships have never come into being** due to the absence of homeowners available to rent their properties to migrants.

#### 4.3.2.6. Acate and Santa Croce Camerina

In this rural area, **local policy makers** ascribe for themselves the role of furthering a two-point political agenda: 1) **limiting labour exploitation** by making sure that contracts are regularly registered; 2) **and enforcing public order** by avoiding squatting and street crime.

As for the first point, the **municipalities do not adopt any initiatives of their own**. Rather, they implement national plans on the basis of inter-municipal networks initiated upon the input of the Prefecture of Ragusa, like in the case of the Thematic Tables on agricultural labour exploitation (see section 4.1.6).



Public officials and public service providers appear to be **focused on technocratic service provision**. They “**do the bare minimum** given the financial constraints” to which their municipal budgets are constantly subject (I-Ac-7, Local official from the municipality). More specifically, when asked about their role in local integration networks, they describe it as providing “universal service access” (I-Ac-11, Public service provider), and therefore not related to migrant inclusion as such; or as a “role of control and verification of legal and administrative procedures” (I-Ac-9, Public service provider).

**Non-profit service providers generally describe themselves as “dynamic actors”** in the local governance framework (I-Ac-2, Private service provider). They play multiple simultaneous roles (advocacy, service provision, training). In addition, they operate in networks among themselves and with voluntary-based NGOs quite effectively around specific issues (e.g. cooperation in linguistic training, cooperation in healthcare provision and mental health assistance, legal assistance, creating occasions for intercultural encounters). Despite being proactive, their initiatives are mostly project-based and have little continuity, except for bigger organisations, like Caritas of Ragusa.

**Trade unions perceived themselves as traditionally playing an advocacy role**, although their actual positioning at the local level appears to be more linked to administrative service provision. Their local office is a reference point for post-2014 migrants regarding bureaucratic procedures linked to work permits, residence permits, and accounting (patronato CGIL). In fact, unions perceive themselves as having the role of mediators between migrants and public officials.

**Employers appear to be generally absent from the picture**. They lament the absence of networks involving them and that “public opinion is often sceptical about employees offering good working conditions to immigrants” (I-Ac-1, Private employer). Lastly, **Employment Centres are seen as ineffective and “irrelevant”** (I-Ac-1, Private employer) from the point of view of job placement.

#### 4.3.2.7. Comparative remarks

Again, **political tradition seems to be the main explanatory factor of the differences between localities**. In all progressive localities (Cuneo, Avigliana, Siracusa), local authorities have a prominent, pivotal role in governance networks. At the same time, in those localities NGOs are not just mere policy implementers: they play a proactive role, and participate in policy formulation and implementation.

In contrast, in conservative localities (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate) municipalities have a marginal role, generally limited to reception and to those targets where local authorities have specific obligations, such as UAMs. In those localities, integration policies are mainly shaped by NGOs, generally the local branches of nation-wide organisations such as Caritas or Sant’Egidio that can rely on substantial economic and organisational resources.

**NGOs have different functions**: they promote integration initiatives with their own resources, act as service providers managing public services, and advocate for migrants’ rights and lobby for a greater engagement of municipalities in migrant integration. With the exception of Novara, where bilateral relations prevail, NGOs show a good level of collaboration among them.



**Private actors are mainly involved in housing measures**, given that in Cuneo and Caltagirone organisations managing reception facilities have sought the collaboration of real estate agencies. However, while this collaboration works rather well in Cuneo, in Caltagirone it has not managed to overcome landlords' distrust against migrants.

**Trade unions mainly provide support for bureaucratic procedures and advocate in favour of migrants' rights. Their role is more prominent in the Southern localities**, probably as a consequence of the weaker role of municipalities compared to the Northern localities, and the greater centrality of labour in the local public agendas concerning post-2014 migrants. In contrast, employers and business organisations appear as absolutely marginal.

Again, the **size of the municipality and the economic trends do not seem to provide significant explanations** of the differences between case studies.

### 4.3.3. Dynamics of cooperation and conflict

#### 4.3.3.1. Novara

The **network analysis has highlighted a very high level of conflict within the local governance network**.

Based on the qualitative research, the relations between the local, the regional and the national approaches depend on the respective political orientation. There was some **tension between the progressive regional government and the local conservative government** with regard to the specific issue of the reception and the integration of post-2014 migrants. For example, in the case of the closure of the swimming activity for asylum seekers which had featured in the local press. This decision was justified by bureaucratic quibbles by the local government, but the Regional Councillor for Equal Opportunities stated that this was a case of discrimination and opened an investigation on this case.

Whereas the local conservative government's approach did not seem to strongly differ from the one adopted by the current centre-right regional government. For both governments, the targets of attention of integration policies are mainly UAMs and victims of trafficking, rather than the whole category of post-2014 migrants and all migrants

In terms of horizontal dimension, one aspect emerges from the interview regarding dynamics of collaboration and conflict: among NGOs, there seems to be tension between smaller associations and larger organisations that are considered reluctant to work as a part of a wide network.

Based on the survey analysis, many conflicts unravel around the trade union and concern its relations with the members of the majority parties, the local government, companies, other municipalities and anti-migrant groups.



#### 4.3.3.2. Cuneo

In Cuneo, **cooperative relations are largely prevailing and collaboration mainly unfolds within the platforms** illustrated in section 4.3.1. Indeed, the **network analysis** (see the Appendix, Figure A1) confirms that the **main actors promoting cooperation** among local actors are the municipality (the “Small Table” and the “Large Table”), non-profit service providers (“Networked Refugees”), pro-migrant NGOs and trade unions (“Clandestine Minerals”). As already explained in section 4.3.1, private companies appear to have collaborative relations with other local actors because they provide internship and job opportunities for single migrants.

**Conflictual relations exist with national government, private companies and anti-migrant and extreme-right groups.** As explained in section 4.4, the conflicts with national government consist in mobilisations against some national acts aimed at restricting the rights of asylum seekers and reducing the expenditure for reception, such as the Security and Migration Decree passed in 2018 (see section 3.1.1.1). The conflict with private companies concerns the fight against exploitation in agriculture that is a key issue in the province of Cuneo, especially with regard to seasonal workers. Finally, the anti-migrant groups are small and marginal in Cuneo so that conflicts are more ideological than policy-centred.

As for the opposition parties, the relations are twofold. The **left-wing coalition, named “Common Goods”, has cooperative relations with several local actors** active around migrant integration and belongs to the “Clandestine Minerals” platform, especially in the field of advocacy, while the right-wing opposition is generally depicted by the large majority of interviewees as conveying opposite views over migrant integration.

It is worth underlining that both the interviewed opposition parties complain about the poor opportunities to exchange with the local majority about migrant integration.

*“There are coordinating tables but the political opposition is excluded from that. All the opposition is excluded (...) We, as opposition, we get informed when decisions have been already made” (I-Cu-14, member of the opposition in the local council)*

*“The dialogue between the political majority and opposition exists but it produces nothing: we are the only councillors against 20 councillors of the majority, it has never happened that an interpellation of ours have passed, generally we are not heard” (I-Cu-19, member of the opposition in the local council)*

Finally, **NGOs that do not provide key services and who are excluded from the “Small Table”,** tend to see this Table as somehow exclusive. Moreover, the NGOs more committed to the watchdog role regard the NGOs managing public services as too shy in contesting local authorities, although this cannot by no means be framed as a conflict.





#### 4.3.3.3. Avigliana

The **network analysis** (see the Appendix, Figure A1) confirms that the **interactions among local actors are strongly collaborative**: Avigliana is the **only locality where the level of internal conflict within the governance network is zero**.

**Less cooperative relations are those with the national government and officials**. The conflicts with the national government consist in mobilisations against some national acts aimed at restricting the rights of asylum seekers and reducing the expenditure for reception, such as the Security and Migration Decree passed in 2018 (see section 3.1.1.1).

Based on the qualitative interviews, **some tension has been registered in the relations between volunteers and professional NGOs**, when these actors acted without a full awareness of the roles and competences of each other. However, this tension was managed through daily, informal dialogue.

*“The strength of municipalities like Avigliana is that there are several examples of migrants who have been adopted by the community, certainly in large municipalities there are organisations that deal with migrants, here they have been directly adopted by the citizens, by the Pro-loco associations, by the parishes. Sometimes we had to explain to the citizens that some initiatives were not useful, that we would not have left anyone without winter shoes, there is sometimes an excess of protectiveness, no one has been abandoned. Widespread solidarity is a beautiful phenomenon, but it must be governed. We have to remember that immigration is a phenomenon governed by the State, there are objective rules that cannot be bypassed” (I-A-2, Local Official)*

One **critical remark** on this dense and collaborative network by some interviewees concerned the level of **inclusivity of this network**. The **tightly knit network of people dealing with** immigration shares the same values and background, but organisations and citizens outside this social bubble are often difficult to reach.

*“There was an attempt at contacting real estate agencies, but it failed. There are two of them in Avigliana whose directors are conservative. There is no relationship between the progressive local government and these real estate agencies. It is typical of social movements to be like little castles.. There is a lot of exchange of resources within the network, but if you try to access resources out of the network, you do not necessarily succeed...” (I-A-3, professional based NGO).*

#### 4.3.3.4. Siracusa

The **network analysis** confirms that **relations among local integration actors and stakeholders are strongly cooperative**. This is the case particularly for the local administration and NGOs, which cooperate on shared projects and within the network initiated by the Prefecture (see 3.1.4).



Specifically, the member of the local government interviewed described the relations as ones of “reciprocal collaboration and capacity building,” both with NGOs, with the Prefecture and the region. Relations are described as based on “a laboratory approach” (Si-11). In this respect, the Cassibile project has offered an important venue for collaboration between these actors (see 3.1.4).

**Isolated exceptions to this collaborative climate are the opposition’s right-wing demonstrations** to protest against the informal settlements in the Cassibile area (rural area at the outskirts of the locality). These protests are reported by the local administration as being isolated, short-term, and targeted at attracting media attention more than voicing substantial claims.

#### 4.3.3.5. Caltagirone

The **network analysis** suggests that dynamics of cooperation can be described along three lines. The first line is **cooperation between public actors**, i.e. within the local administration and between the latter and public service providers. Public service providers described good working relationships with the local administration as well as with the police department through internet services. The Employment Centre sees as very fruitful the cooperation with non-profit service providers.

The second line of cooperation is the one **between the local administration, NGOs, and non-profit service providers**. The cooperation and involvement of the municipality in CSOs’ initiatives **is seen as key, but usually non-proactive and limited to minimal support**. This lack of support was explicitly attributed to the administration being right-wing.

*“The action of the municipality is important, thanks to the decision to carry out SAI projects such as this one, there is a very close collaboration with social services.” (I-Ca-4, No-profit service provider)*

*“We come from ten years of extreme right in Caltagirone, so we had social services that did not cooperate with us very much. The role [of the municipality] was limited to doing the bare minimum. (...) It was always private service providers which had the leading role and did not always feel supported at the institutional level” (I-Ca-8, No-profit service provider).*

**Tensions emerge occasionally in relation to the division of responsibility and competences**, particularly between professional-based NGOs and public social services.

*“There **have been tensions**, particularly over the identification of responsibilities and competencies. There has also been a lot of frustration with respect to what should be done and cannot be done for*



*various reasons, including those related to the unfulfilled responsibilities of national and regional levels of government. It is a domino effect. For example, the social services should take care of the minors, but then the municipalities are emptied of social workers and therefore have difficulty in doing what is foreseen.” (I-Ca-7, Expert)*

At the same time, these occasional conflicts or lack of support were not reported by the municipality’s representative, who, instead, describes their role as one of coordinator and “initiator of a dialogue platform for NGOs and neighbouring municipalities in the socio-sanitary district” (I-Ca-10, Mayor).

As for the third line of cooperation concerns **non-profit organisations, and professional and voluntary-based NGOs** that cooperate with each other around the SAI reception programmes and through AMIF projects. **Cooperation generally happens in small groups and follows “a dialogic approach”** (I-Ca-7, Expert), with no relevant conflicts identified.

#### 4.3.3.6. Acate and Santa Croce Camerina

The qualitative **interviews** conducted in this area suggest **conflictual relations between the local administrations and private service providers.**

**Non-profit service providers report conflicts with the administration in the framework of the Salvini Decree**, namely 1) the renewal of reception agreements, and 2) the enforcement of new accounting regulations regarding reception centres. In particular, they are **negatively affected by the lengthy and punitive accounting rules** that made the financial management of centres very hard or virtually impossible. The administration also threatened to terminate the agreement. The left-wing opposition and trade unions could do little to counter this opposition and in the end the conflict was resolved by using legal means. The local reception service provider also laments lack of support from the Prefecture during the pandemic, especially regarding the missing provision of adequate facilities for confinement of guests.

More generally, **cooperation between local public services/administrations and NGOs is based on minimum service provision** upon NGOs’ initiative or request (e.g. Partnership in Progetto Presidio with Proxima, projects funded by the ministry through PON Legalità, schooling and school bus). In addition, other interviewees denounced the “total absence of public policies or initiatives at the local level” as a result of which **initiatives proceed based on a “superhero approach”** (I-Ac-4, Expert/pro-migrant group), i.e. on the goodwill of individuals or project-based initiatives of NGOs. This is implied to be the **result of the grim financial situation of the municipality** and of the disengagement or outright hostility of the municipality.

Still, openly **conflictual dynamics are absent, too, due to low politicisation, little awareness of the issues, and normalisation of the presence of agricultural workers living in destitution.**

On the contrary, **CSOs and trade unions are described as having good relations** and, taken as a whole, they have taken up the role of critical mass vis-à-vis the local administration and the prefecture.



#### 4.3.3.7. Comparative remarks

**In progressive localities (Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa) cooperative relations are largely prevailing.**

**In conservative localities cooperation is much poorer but we cannot say that open conflictual dynamics prevail.** Acate shows the most explicit conflicts between local authorities and non-profit service providers, although they have been limited to the renewal of the contract for the management of reception services and triggered by an external event, i.e. the 2018 Decree on Security and Migration.

**Tensions - not conflicts - between NGOs** have been registered in several cases. Cuneo and Avigliana show the two-fold nature of tightly knit networks that can be perceived as exclusive circles by those that do not participate, although this never turns into actual conflicts, whereas in Novara larger organisations are regarded by smaller ones as reluctant to engaged in a wide network, preferring instead bilateral relations.

Tensions with anti-migrant or right-wing movements have been registered only in Cuneo and Siracusa, but in both cases they appear marginal. In general terms, we can affirm that **anti-migrant and/or right-wing groups do not represent a major source of conflict** in any of the target localities.

Finally, while **politicisation appears low in the Southern Italian localities, in the Northern Italy politics seems to somehow affect the relations between the levels of government, with a relevant role played by the Piedmont Region.** In Novara, the local conservative government and the progressive regional government had some clashes when the first introduced specific limitations for post-2014 migrants. In the progressive localities of Cuneo and Avigliana, (symbolic rather than actual) conflicts occurred with the national government when Matteo Salvini, the leader of the League, was Minister of Interior. Those conflicts consisted in mobilisations against national acts aimed at restricting the rights of asylum seekers and reducing the expenditure for reception, such as the Security and Migration Decree passed in 2018. In this regard, it is worth reminding that the centre-left regional majority in Piedmont went far beyond and appealed the 2018 Decree on Security and Migration in front of the Court (see section 3.1.4.1). Hence, the approval of that Decree can be regarded as the contingency where the strongest conflicts between the national government and the lower tiers occurred.

## 4.4 Decision making

Before illustrating the empirical results, it is important to underline **some methodological issues concerning the online survey.** Since the respondents tend to consider a large share of the proposed items as relevant factors influencing their action in the field of migrant integration, we have chosen to focus our analysis on those items which score 4 (very influential) or 5 (extremely influential). Moreover, as observed during the qualitative interviews, the same item has been frequently



understood differently by different respondents. Therefore, the survey's results will be interpreted in the light of qualitative interviews and, in case of conflicting results, we opt for the interpretation emerged from the latter. Finally, respondents' own values and ideas are by far the prevailing driving factors of their choices with little variation between case studies and categories of actors. Therefore, this factor cannot explain different patterns of decision-making and, because of that, we will keep it rather marginal in the following analysis.

#### 4.4.1. Novara

The general analysis of social policies suggests that **many organisations do not feel engaged in migrant integration**. Regarding the survey, apart from the factor consisting of one's own values and ideas, the other factors do not receive on average a particularly high or significant score. However, it is worth highlighting how **interviewees from NGOs managing CAS facilities identify the financial cuts to the reception system decided by the former minister Salvini in 2018 as a crucial factor hampering integration activities within governmental reception centres**.

In a local context characterised by weak and absent policies on post-2014 migrants, it is probably more relevant to focus on the **factors determining the lack of action** rather than those driving action. The majority of the interviewees identify as the main factors limiting their action in favour of integration the following: **the lack of adequate funding; the lack of structured policies at the national, regional and local levels; and the lack of a local strategy for integration**. Hence, the main responsibility is put on governments at different levels while emphasising that integration policy has been left to grassroots voluntary organisations driven by their mission.

#### 4.4.2. Cuneo

Looking at the results of the online survey, we **cannot identify either clear prevailing factors explaining respondents' decisions in the field of migrant integration nor neat differences between the categories of actors**. Nevertheless, alongside respondents' own values and ideas, we register a **slight prevalence of the national government's decisions and locals' attitudes towards migrants as main drivers of decisions**. According to the results of the qualitative interviews, the respondents' action has to be understood as a reaction to *negative* governmental decisions and *negative* attitudes rather than as accommodating responses to those inputs. In particular, national policies around reception and asylum seekers, such as the Security and **Migration Decree promoted by the Ministry of Interior Matteo Salvini in 2018 (see section 3.1.1.1)**, seem to have played a central role in **mobilising civil society and in pushing professional NGOs** to abandon the CAS system and lobbying for strengthening the local SAI.

*“We have organised mobilisations against...the last one was that against the Salvini Decree” (I-Cu-8, trade union)*



*“Especially starting from Salvini Decree there has been a wave of mobilisations in favour of migrants, to find alternative and positive solutions and, on the other hand, the opposing sides have warmed up again” (I-Cu-3, pro-migrant NGO)*

*“The other thing that reinforced our choice was the Salvini Decree, we have then not participated in the bid for CAS facilities; in contrast, we have chosen to widen local SAI as the only reception system” (I-Cu-4, service provider)*

Looking at municipality’s action, a turning point was its taking over of the leadership of SAI inter-municipal consortium<sup>54</sup> in 2016 when the Municipality of Carmagnola stepped down, and the following SAI’s substantial enlargement (places in the province passed from 58 in 2016 to 265 in 2021<sup>55</sup>, so that SAI of the province Cuneo is now one of the largest in Italy). This decision increased the relevance of migrant integration in the municipal political agenda and was the result of two different factors: on the one hand, the bottom-up inputs coming from the professional NGOs’ network “Networked Refugees” and especially its effort to stimulate a greater involvement of public authorities in asylum seekers’ reception; on the other hand, the central government’s top-down decision to introduce, in 2016, the “safeguard clause” establishing that the municipalities whose SAI reception places met a certain ratio of asylum seekers would be exempted from the establishment of any new CAS (see section 3.1.1.1). Hence, to avoid the setting up of CAS, the municipality took over the coordination of SAI and pushed for its expansion.

In the subsequent years, the expansion of integration policies was also driven by the political choices of the majority elected in 2017, with a key role played by the Deputy Mayor for Social Policies.

*“In my opinion, the fact that the municipality has become the leader of such a large SAI project has open up....If I have to assess the political vision and ability, I would say that they are positive compared to the past (...) When Carmagnola did not want to lead the SAI any more, we asked Cuneo and it accepted and then has expanded it until it reached 265 places. Then, both the political vision of the Municipality of Cuneo and the push from “Networked Refugees” that tried to raise awareness of the territory and local institutions have favoured this large reception project” (I-Cu-4, non-profit service provider)*

*“The choice of attributing specific competences over reception [to the Deputy Mayor of Social Policies] has been the result of a political orientation” (I-Cu-11, member of the local government).*

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<sup>54</sup> This SAI project involve 16 Municipalities

<sup>55</sup> of which 80 are located in Cuneo’s territorial basin (SAI Cuneo. Report 2020, Comune di Cuneo)



*“In 2016 we took the coordination of SAI from Carmagnola. The reason was the safeguard clause: we did that to steer the phenomenon” (I-Cu-9, local official from the municipality)*

More recently, the increase of migrants spending their spare time or sleeping around the railway station - the majority of which are post-2014 migrants - appears as a further factor fostering the activation of local actors around migrant integration. This has triggered both the civil society's mobilisation to provide support and the municipality's activation under the pressure of residents.

*“The presence of seasonal workers has stimulated pro-migrant organisations since it activated a sensibility around this issue, how it is possible that persons, workers and have to sleep in that situation? Therefore, this has created tensions but in favour of the adoption of more instruments and services for foreigner persons. In fact, this, not only this, was a significant element of pressure, has pushed the administration to join ‘Good Land’” (I-Cu-4, non-profit service provider)*

#### 4.4.3. Avigliana and surrounding villages

The general analysis of the local policies suggests that the **proactive approach of local policy makers and rooted NGOs set the local agenda.**

The demands of local majority parties and of local government appear as the main driving factor of the survey respondents' choices. This is related to the fact MAD, the local CAS project, stemmed from the will of local administrators which signed a special agreement with the Prefecture to assume the responsibilities over the local CAS with the aim of putting the governance of migration under the control of local authorities.

The substantial flow of young migrants who cross the Susa Valley to reach France<sup>56</sup> was certainly a further factor that influenced the decision making, considering the minors among them, when intercepted, fell under the responsibility of social services (Con.I.S.A). Successively, a mix of factors, including the culture of solidarity, the activism of the local community, and Con.I.S.A's proactive approach prompted the search for new projects, not limited to reception, but addressing integration in more general terms.

Moreover, it is worth noticing that the creation of public-private networks has a cumulative effect since it generates the conditions to participate in calls for projects and co-design new interventions. This has also to be considered as a driving factor of the decision to multiply and expand the interventions.

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<sup>56</sup> Data regarding this flow are available in “ Medici per i diritti umani, Il Rapporto sulla rotta nord-ovest delle Alpi: alta valle di Susa, 2021”. See:[https://mediciperidirittiumani.org/medu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-sulla-rotta-Nord-Ovest-delle-Alpi\\_-Alta-Valle-di-Susa-Ottobre-dicembre-2020\\_def.pdf](https://mediciperidirittiumani.org/medu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-sulla-rotta-Nord-Ovest-delle-Alpi_-Alta-Valle-di-Susa-Ottobre-dicembre-2020_def.pdf)



Finally, three respondents to the survey have considered “very influential” the attitudes of the local population. Indeed, the openness of the population and the mobilisation of the local community contribute to explain the proactive management of migration flows by local actors.

#### 4.4.4. Siracusa

The general analysis of local policies suggests that the **local agenda reflects national and regional guidelines, projects, and funding** regarding reception, integration, and labour exploitation. Next to this, the progressive values and political orientation of the local administration are also seen as an influential factor, to the involvement of the municipality in proactive cooperation with local NGOs and regional networks, specifically in Cassibile and around the protection of UAMs.

**Political actors reported that their initiatives were motivated also by pro-migrant mobilisations.**

In light of the interviews, the latter should be interpreted as referring to two types of mobilisations. The first are mobilisations at the national and local level in response to labour exploitation and degrading housing conditions in the rural areas surrounding the locality (see section 4.1.4). The second type of mobilisation likely refers to the movement for volunteer guardianship initiated by local activists (Accoglierete) which gave a crucial impulse to the NGO/pro-migrant network at the local level.

**In the third group of actors (public and private service providers, trade unions, and employers), many assigned the highest importance to values and ideas** with reference to the fact that their underlying motivations have not been hampered by the delays and restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, this group of actors holds the view that the pandemic has “contributed to raise awareness about the importance of agricultural workers” (I-Si-1, Trade union). Requests from local NGOs and associations were also assigned high scores by this group of respondents. This can be explained by the fact that most of them work for local NGOs. Importantly, employer organisations mentioned that local administrations are very influential because they co-plan initiatives in the rural outskirts of the locality (the area of Cassibile).

Importantly, elections were assigned the least importance across the range of actors interviewed. The same applies to requests from both the majority and the opposition in the local council. This confirms the general findings on the low level of politicisation of the issue.

#### 4.4.5. Caltagirone

Policy makers’ responses indicate that the local government’s political agenda, clearly placed within the centre-right tradition, remains a very influential factor.

*“Ours was an administration squarely within the centre-right tradition, we administered in good conscience and like a savvy father” (I-Ca-10, Mayor).*





In addition, the member of local government interviewed add that *“the requests of public officials and especially social services have been influential in addition to values and ideas of humanity”* (I-Ca-10, Mayor), suggesting that, in fact, they view suggestions from public officials has been very influential (contrary to what indicated in the survey).

Responses from NGOs and private service providers interviewed assign high scores to requests from NGOs. These are to be understood as requests from the organisations the respondents belong to. One respondent elaborates on this point by stating that *“activities follow strictly the SAI reception funding and the national Central Service”* (I-Ca-5, Non-profit service provider). This confirms the general finding that, beyond what can be considered individual biases, the greatest factor influencing NGOs operating in this field is the availability of reception programmes or post reception funding, with little or no independent local agenda.

#### 4.4.6. Acate and Santa Croce Camerina

The role of the local administration emerges clearly as a factor influencing integration policies, mostly in a negative way. **One no-profit service providers interviewed mentions the “obstruction from the municipality which has affected decision making”** (I-Ac-2, No-profit service provider) in relation to the refusal of the administration to renew the reception programme contracts in the framework of the changes introduced by the Salvini Decree (see section 3.1.1). In this framework, the service provider reports that its actions as well as its employees were put under concrete risk of having to stop. No support came from any other actor and the service provider had to seek independent legal help to pressure the municipality to renew the contract.

Similarly, when prompted to elaborate their responses to the survey, other interviewees state that *“despite values, we have to face reality. We feel the obstruction from politicians at the regional and local level”* (I-Ac-6, Real estate union). This statement was not made in connection to specific policies or actions but in relation to the right-leaning political orientation of the regional and local administrations which were generally felt as creating an unsupportive environment.

Lastly, qualitative interviews suggest that all actors assign implicitly or explicitly high relevance to the availability of funding, given the lack of independent local/municipal resources for social inclusion.

#### 4.4.7. Comparative remarks

The **local authorities’ and political majorities’ orientation, decisions and requests appear as relevant factors explaining local actors’ decision-making in all case studies**, although this importance assumes diverse meanings. In progressive localities (Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa), it refers to the activism of local authorities whereas in conservative localities (Novara and Acate, but not Caltagirone) it is intended as local authorities’ obstructionism or lack of initiative.

**Mobilisation of the local community is mentioned as a relevant factor driving decisions in Avigliana and Siracusa, two progressive localities with a lively local society.**



**The relevance of the national government’s decisions, highlighted in Cuneo and Acate, refers to the acts passed in 2018**, when Matteo Salvini was Minister of Interior, and aimed at reducing economic resources for and suppressing integration services in CAS facilities. Hence, the central government's decisions have to be intended as “**negative inputs**”. However, the final results were not the same everywhere: in Cuneo that national decision pushed the NGOs to abandon the CAS system (to invest only in the SAI system), while in Acate NGOs wanted to keep CAS facilities opened against the will of the municipality that, under the new conditions, was reluctant to renew the reception programme. Finally, national decisions assumed a positive role in Cuneo with regard to the “safeguard clause” that led to the expansion of the local SAI facilities.

It is important to underline that the **availability of funding given by the national or regional governments has been mentioned as a relevant factor driving decisions in Caltagirone and Acate**, confirming that the more limited economic resources available in **Southern localities** increase the importance of the funds coming from the higher levels of government.



## 5. Conclusion

With regard to integration policies addressing post-2014 migrants, **Italian localities swing between complete political autonomy from and total economic dependence on the higher levels of government.** On one hand, municipalities have no specific obligations concerning migrant reception and integration, with the exception of unaccompanied minors (UAMs). They can decide whether to set up SAI facilities and initiate integration measures or not - only the setting up of CAS centres can be imposed by the Prefectures but those facilities are generally run by NGOs without the involvement of municipalities. On the other hand, municipalities do not have a dedicated institutional budget for migrant integration, unless the region decides to devote part of the Fund for Social Policies to that. Hence, **almost all the funds for migrant integration come from calls for projects issued by the national government** - and, especially in Northern Italy, by bank foundations. As a result, local integration policies generally depend, on one hand, on the priorities and constraints of those calls for projects and, on the other hand, on the local actors' will and ability to submit successful projects.

Those MLG arrangements produce several consequences.

First, **governance networks within each locality are largely project-based.** And this holds true in both conservative and progressive localities, although in the latter local authorities tend to coordinate the different projects and actors, limiting networks' fragmentation.

Second, **dependence on calls for projects increases the relevance of municipal council's political orientation, namely the relevance of local authorities' will to take a proactive stance over post-2014 migrant integration** and participate in those bids. Indeed, in the progressive localities (Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa), the municipality shows a proactive approach towards integration, attracting funds through projects, whereas this is not the case in conservative localities (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate).

**This system, in turn, increases the role of NGOs in several respects.**

- 1) Given that local authorities seldom have the internal competences to **draft and manage projects**, those competences are provided by NGOs. For this reason, in our (progressive) case studies, **there seems to be a direct relation between the number of projects and the degree of cooperation between local authorities and NGOs** since the two elements reinforce each other.
- 2) Given that mainstream welfare services (social assistance, employment agencies, housing services, etc) have neither obligations nor structural resources to foster migrant integration, the **large majority of services addressing post-2014 migrants are managed by professional and voluntary-based NGOs**, either on their own or on behalf of public entities.
- 3) Given the lack of institutional obligations of the local authorities in the field of migrant integration, **when municipalities opt for disengagement, NGOs can step in without interfering with public duties.** Indeed, in conservative localities, integration policies



are mainly shaped by NGOs, generally the **local branches of nation-wide organisations** such as Caritas or Sant’Egidio that can rely on substantial economic and organisational resources.

Considering the **whole-of-community approach**, the interactions of multiple actors – as individuals, organisations, institutions and/or corporate entities – engaging in migrant integration are larger **in progressive localities, although with relevant differences substantially depending on local rooted identities**. This approach has clearly emerged in Avigliana, located in a mountain valley with a strong identity and a long-standing tradition of civic mobilisation, where pro-migrant activism involves associations and private citizens. In Cuneo, the local “social Catholicism” has fostered the activation of local charities and parishes and their volunteers to support post-2014 migrants in everyday life and provide them “third accommodation” solutions after they leave reception facilities. In Siracusa, the involvement of the civil society has mainly emerged around the UAMs’ voluntary guardianship association Accoglierete (Welcoming Network/You will welcome) after the mobilisation of local branches of the nation-wide NGOs Asgi and Arci. Against this backdrop, **the marginality of the role of the business community and of migrant organisations** crosscuts all the target localities.

**While local political orientation clearly matters, the other structural conditions (economic trends, size of the municipality, levels of diversity) do not appear as particularly significant in driving integration policy outcomes.** The most developed integration policies addressing post-2014 migrants have been identified in localities of different sizes and with diverse economic and demographic situations, i.e. Cuneo (small town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants higher than the average of Northern Italy), Avigliana (rural area, with a variation of the income and inhabitants higher than the average of Northern Italy) and Siracusa (medium town, with a variation of the income and inhabitants lower than the average of Southern Italy). At the same time, the localities with a stronger tradition of cultural diversity (i.e. with a share of foreign residents in 2005 higher than the regional average), i.e. Cuneo, Novara and Acate, show heterogeneous situations with the first having a proactive approach and the other two displaying poor integration policies.

Finally, we formulate **four policy recommendations** that, according to our findings, could improve post-2014 migrant integration policies in Italian small and medium town and rural areas.

First, **blurring the separation between the reception system and the welfare system would contribute to bridge the gap between the reception stage**, where migrants are largely assisted, **and the post-reception stage**, where they are on their own with poor or no support. Since it is unlikely that it will happen through national reforms, local actors could take the initiative by employing part of the reception’s resources to reinforce the ability of local welfare services to meet the needs of newcomers when they are both within and outside the reception system. Avigliana is probably the case where this process is more advanced.



Second, **enhancing the cooperation between municipalities, especially small and medium ones, may reinforce their chances to be heard by higher levels of government** (including the Prefectures) and can allow them to pool resources and develop economies of scale to cope with post-2014 migrant integration. Good examples in this regard are Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa.

Third, **the engagement of the business community is much needed and it could start from sharing (or building) common frames and goals** instead of regarding local companies as mere job or internship providers. This would probably require a partial reformulation of other local actors' frames and language.

Fourth, **engaging migrant organisations is also fundamental**. This implies, on one hand, to increase post-2014 migrants' participation in civil society organisations and, on the other hand, to provide them with the soft skills needed to participate in consultations, exchanges and decision-making processes on equal footing with long-standing residents, without being trapped in a subaltern position.



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## Appendix

*Table A.1. List of interviewees*

INTERVIEWEE CODE	LOCALITY	TYPE OF INTERVIEWEE
NOVARA		
I-N-1	NOVARA	NON-PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-N-2	NOVARA	NON-PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-N-3	NOVARA	EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATION
I-N-4	NOVARA	NON-PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-N-5	NOVARA	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS
I-N-6	NOVARA	EXPERT
I-N-7	NOVARA	EMPLOYEE OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
I-N-8	NOVARA	MEMBER OF OPPOSITION (PROGRESSIVE)
I-N-9	NOVARA	LOCAL OFFICIAL
I-N-10	NOVARA	EMPLOYER
I-N-11	NOVARA	EMPLOYER
I-N-12	NOVARA	TRADE UNIONS
I-N-14	NOVARA	MEMBER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CONSERVATIVE)
I-N-15	NOVARA	REAL ESTATE AGENCY



I-N-16	NOVARA	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs/GROUPS/ASSOCIATIONS
I-N17	NOVARA	PRO MIGRANTS NGOs/GROUPS/ASSOCIATIONS
<b>CUNEO</b>		
I-Cu-1	CUNEO	EMPLOYMENT AGENCY (REGIONAL PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICE)
I-Cu-3	CUNEO	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS
I-Cu-4	CUNEO	NON-PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Cu-5	CUNEO	EXPERT
I-Cu-6	CUNEO	EMPLOYEE OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
I-Cu-7	CUNEO	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS
I-Cu-8	CUNEO	TRADE UNIONS
I-Cu-9	CUNEO	LOCAL OFFICIAL
I-Cu-10	CUNEO	NON PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Cu-12	CUNEO	NON PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Cu-13	CUNEO	EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATION
I-Cu-14	CUNEO	MEMBER OF OPPOSITION (POPULIST)
I-Cu-15	CUNEO	EMPLOYEE OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
I-Cu-16	CUNEO	PRIVATE EMPLOYER
I-Cu-17	CUNEO	PRIVATE EMPLOYER
I-Cu-18	CUNEO	REAL ESTATE AGENCY
I-Cu-19	CUNEO	MEMBER OF OPPOSITION (RIGHT-WING)





AVIGLIANA		
I-A-1	AVIGLIANA	EMPLOYMENT AGENCY (REGIONAL PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICE)
I-A-2	AVIGLIANA	LOCAL OFFICIAL
I-A-3	AVIGLIANA	NON PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-A-4	AVIGLIANA	NON PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-A-5	AVIGLIANA	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS
I-A-6	AVIGLIANA	EMPLOYEE OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
I-A-7	AVIGLIANA	MEMBER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (PROGRESSIVE)
I-A-8	AVIGLIANA	MEMBER OF OPPOSITION (POPULIST)
I-A-9	AVIGLIANA	EMPLOYER
I-A-11	AVIGLIANA	TRADE UNION
I-A-13	AVIGLIANA	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS
I-A-15	AVIGLIANA	EMPLOYMENT AGENCY (REGIONAL PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICE)
I-A-18	AVIGLIANA	REAL ESTATE AGENCY
I-A-19	AVIGLIANA	EMPLOYER
I-A-20	AVIGLIANA	EMPLOYER
SIRACUSA		
I-Si-1	SIRACUSA	TRADE UNIONS
I-Si-2	SIRACUSA	NON PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Si-3	SIRACUSA	NON-PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER

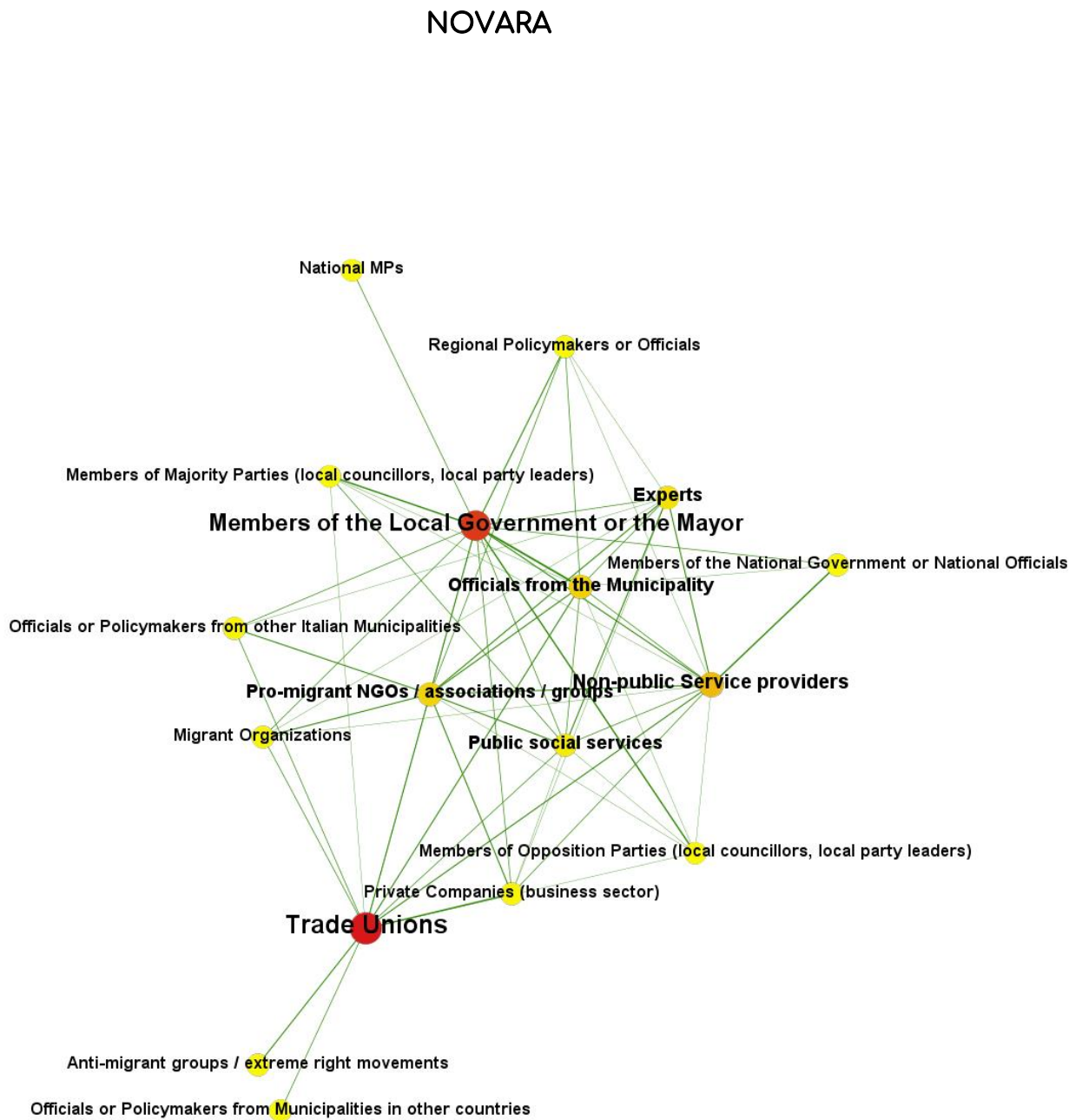


I-Si-4	SIRACUSA	EMPLOYER
I-Si-5	SIRACUSA	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS
I-Si-6	SIRACUSA	NON PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Si-7	SIRACUSA	REAL ESTATE COMPANY
I-Si-8	SIRACUSA	EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATION
I-Si-9	SIRACUSA	EMPLOYEE OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
I-Si-10	SIRACUSA	LOCAL OFFICIAL FROM THE MUNICIPALITY
I-Si-11	SIRACUSA	MEMBER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (PROGRESSIVE)
<b>CALTAGIRONE</b>		
I-Ca-1	CALTAGIRONE	EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATION
I-Ca-2	CALTAGIRONE	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS
I-Ca-3	CALTAGIRONE	EMPLOYMENT AGENCY (REGIONAL PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICE)
I-Ca-4	CALTAGIRONE	NON PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Ca-5	CALTAGIRONE	NON-PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Ca-6	CALTAGIRONE	TRADE UNIONS
I-CA-7	CALTAGIRONE	EXPERT
I-Ca-8	CALTAGIRONE	NON-PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Ca-9	CALTAGIRONE	LOCAL OFFICIAL
I-Ca-10	CALTAGIRONE	MEMBER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CONSERVATIVE)
I-Ca-11	CALTAGIRONE	PRIVATE EMPLOYER



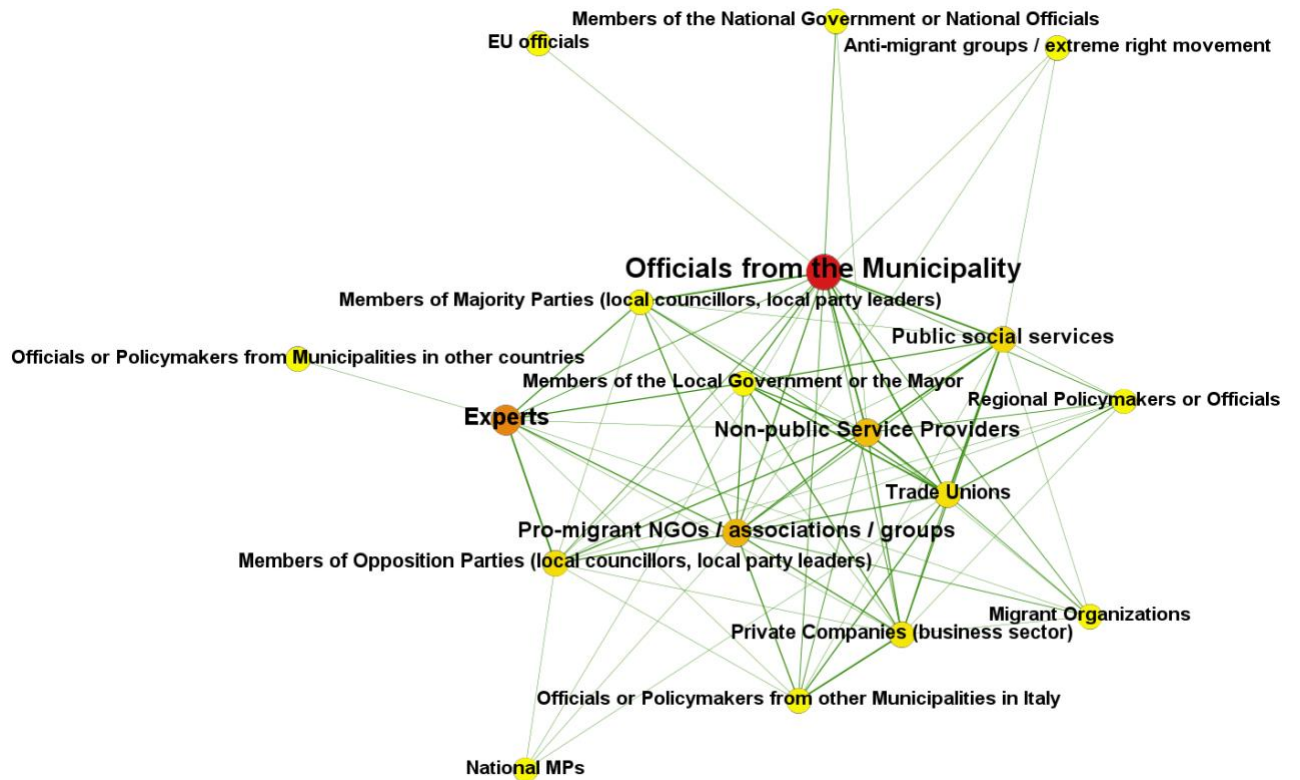
ACATE		
I-Ac-1	ACATE	EMPLOYER
I-Ac-2	ACATE	NON PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDER
I-Ac-3	ACATE	EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATION
I-Ac-4	ACATE	EXPERT / PRO-MIGRANT GROUP / SERVICE PROVISION
I-Ac-5	ACATE	PRO-MIGRANT NGOs / GROUPS / ASSOCIATIONS
I-Ac-6	ACATE	REAL ESTATE COMPANY
I-Ac-7	ACATE	LOCAL OFFICIAL FROM THE MUNICIPALITY
I-Ac-8	ACATE	TRADE UNIONS
I-Ac-9	ACATE	EMPLOYEE OF PUBLIC SERVICE
I-Ac-10	ACATE	MEMBER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CONSERVATIVE)
I-Ac-11	ACATE	EMPLOYEE OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

Figure A.1. Analysis of local networks.



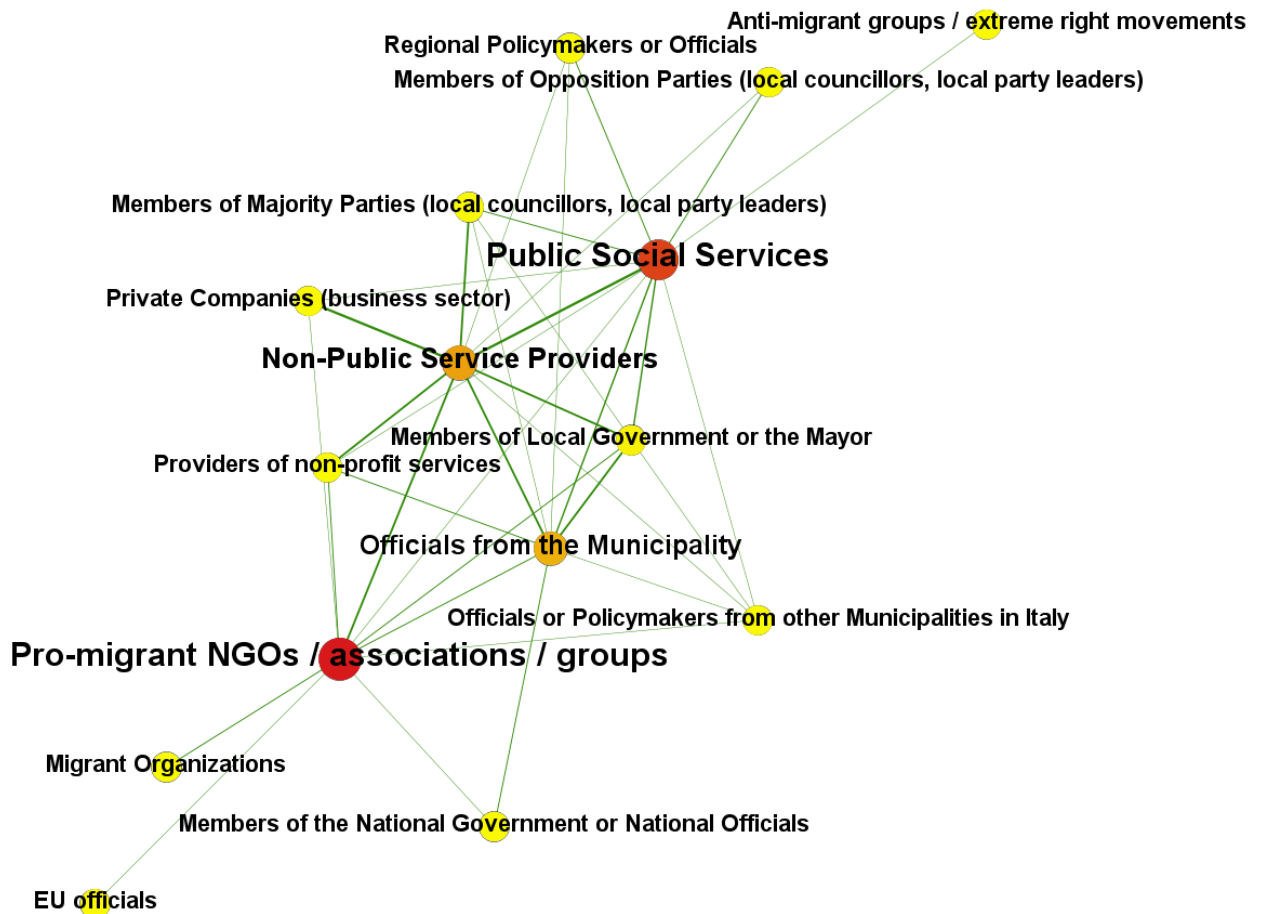


## CUNEO



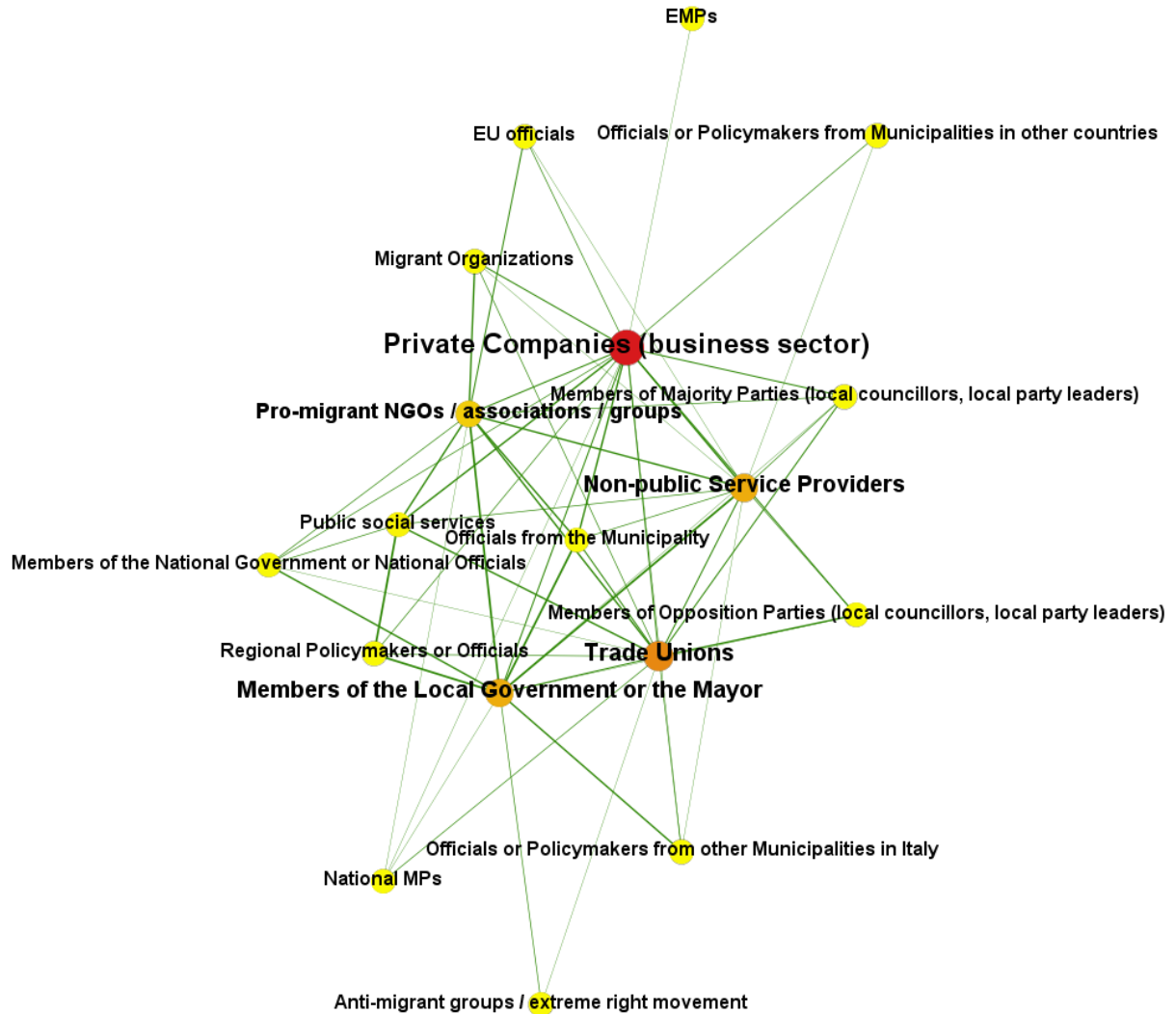


## AVIGLIANA



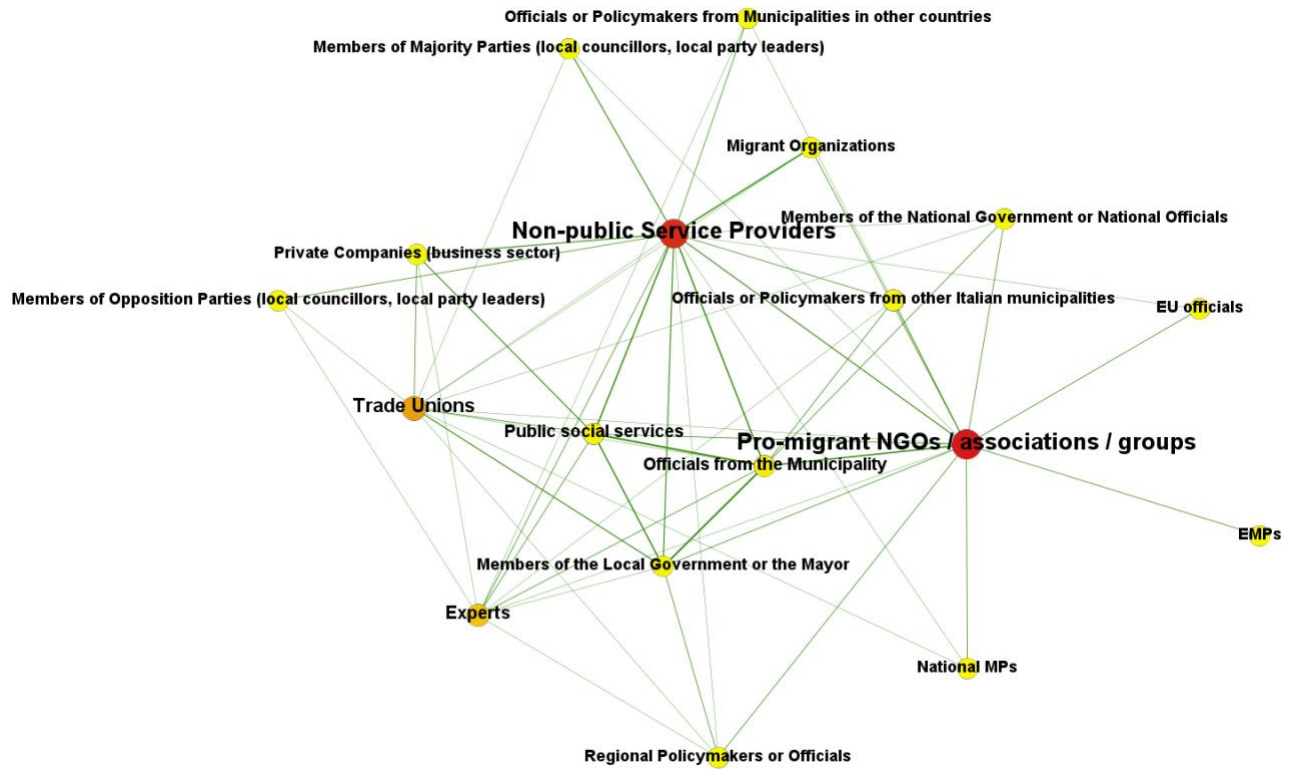


## SIRACUSA





## CALTAGIRONE







<https://whole-comm.eu>



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